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Vol. 3, No. 3
Spring/Summer 1999
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Inside the minds of Babylon 5's telepaths

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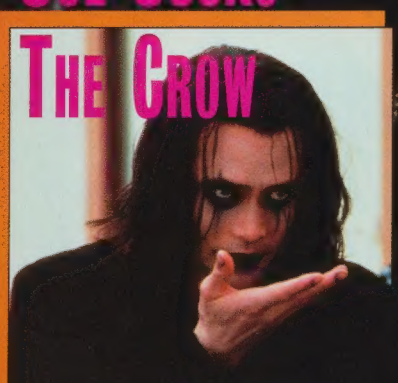

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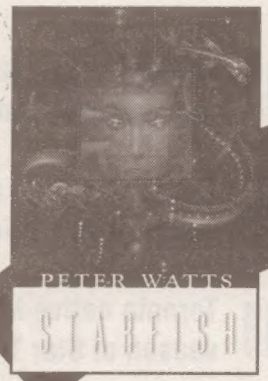

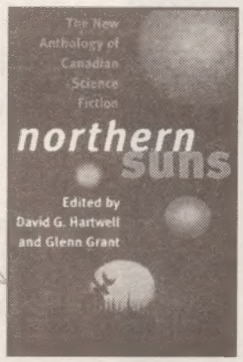

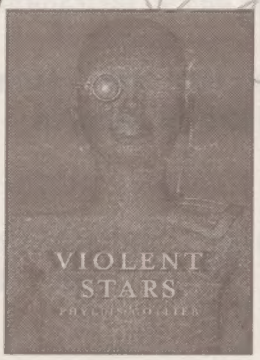

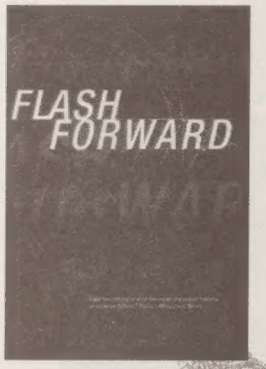

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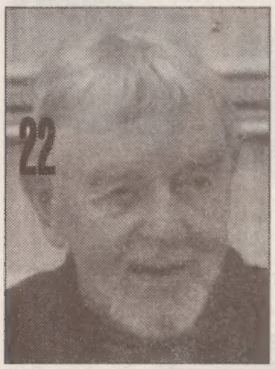

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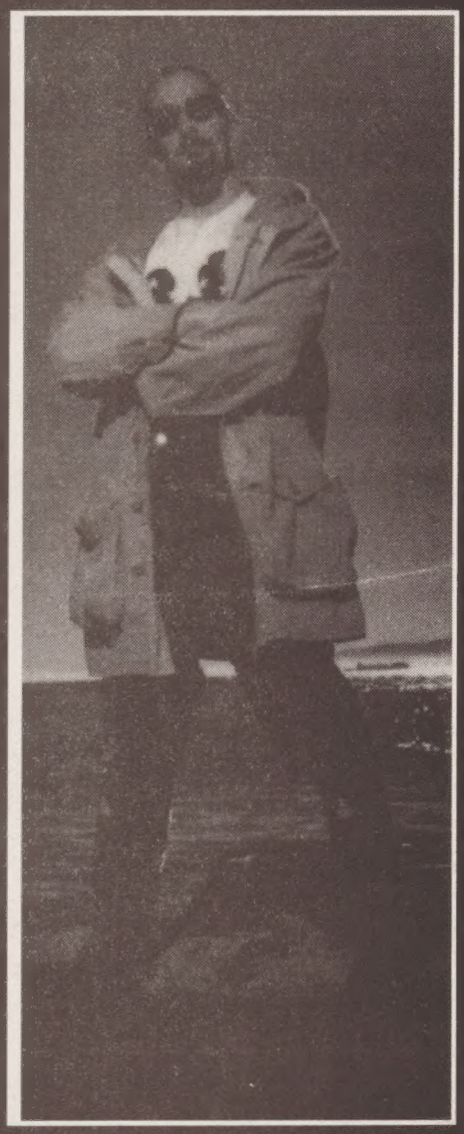

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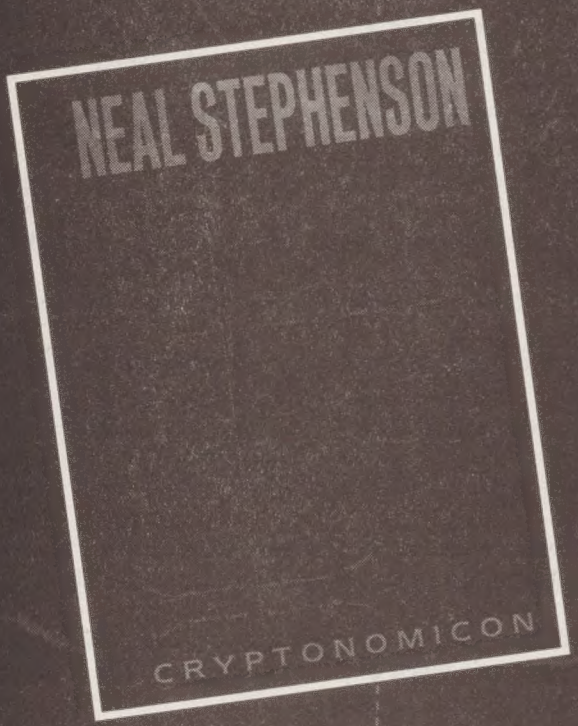

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Star Wars and 2001: two visions of sci-fi

Since the start of the year, there have been two significant "events" in science fiction.

Of course, one of the events is the unleashing of the tidal force that is Phantom Menace. The movie is expected to reap a bonanza — although with the hype it received for two years prior to its release and the massive merchandising campaign that is inevitable, the show cannot hope but be anything but a critical and financial flop (the latter would be true if it earned $10 billion and held theatre screens hostage for the next two years).

The other event was the passing of Stanley Kubrick.

Although Kubrick's forays into science fiction were meagre in number they were inspring and monumental in scope. His passing leaves a void I don't see filled anytime in the near future — if at all.

2001: A Space Odyssey stands as a landmark film (and one of my favourites). It demonstrated that it was possible to grasp the issues and philosophical underpinnings of science fiction and put them on the big screen without losing them in special effects.

And let's not forget Clockwork Orange, the film which gave us a the most depressing vision of our future in movies. It's depressing because of how humans turned out in the near future and how the social behaviour mechanisms deal with individualism (OK, violent individualism).

With 2001, Arthur C. Clarke did give him a fantastic story to work from and Kubrick was always a director who pulled the best from the actors working under his charge. But his vision and his ability to bring large issues down to a comprehensible scale, set him apart from the science fiction movie mavens of today.

Indeed, there is a vast difference between film-making and movie-making.

So now, let us consider Phantom Menace.

Going into its May premiere there could be little doubt it would be ladden with the special effects that is Lucas' forte. Lucas does spin a yarn with the best of them, but beyond that what of it? Is this what science fiction and movies have come down to?

Merchandising? Ticket sales? New computer technology? Special effects to cover the lack of a deep-thinking plot?

There is little doubt audiences will be turning their attention toward the next installmernt and the develoution of Skywalker, but philosophical questions will be few and far between. In fact, I dare say audiences will be left to argue the symbolism of aspects of the movie because outside of the battle of good and evil or even between commerce and the rest of the world, there are no overriding questions to be considered or applied our lives.

The ability to bring issues was always the strength and virtue of science fiction, now it's ignored or, worse still, is buried beneath so much special-effects that it's missed entirely.

In much the same way as the protagonist in Clockwork Orange, audiences are left staring at images on a screen and having their behaviour subtly modified — their expectations lowered. I guess Kubrick had it right again.

'til next time

— Chris

P.S.

Let's hear what you have to say on this or any other subject, drop us a note or an email to parsec@isys.ca.

Event launches five novels

The National Science Fiction and Fantasy Society launched five major Canadian Science Fiction works at the Arts and Letters Club, in Toronto, on May 7.

The five books were Northern Suns, edited by David G. Hartwell and Glenn Grant, The Dragon's Eye, by Joël Champetier, Violent Stars, by Phyllis Gotlieb, Flashforward, by Robert J. Sawyer and Starfish, by Peter Watts.

More than writers and readers attended the launch.

In addition to the featured authors, other SF notables including Don Bassingthwaite, Julie Czerneda, James Alan Gardner, Terence M. Green, Don Hutchison, Guy Gavriel Kay, Edo van Belkom, Andrew Weiner and Robert Charles Wilson enjoyed the festivities.

Other Canadian sci-fi notables in attendance included: Robert Boycuk, Laurie Channer, Eric Choi, Carolyn Clink, T.M. Driverman, Marcel Gagne, Michael Glickson, Peter Halasz, Wesley Herbert, Nancy Johnston, Mark L. Lefebvre, Scott Mackay, Susan Manchester, Sally McBride, David Nickle. Ursula Pflug, Robert Runte, the other Peter Sellers, Michael Skeet, Dale L. Sproule, Sally Tomasevic, and Allan Weiss.

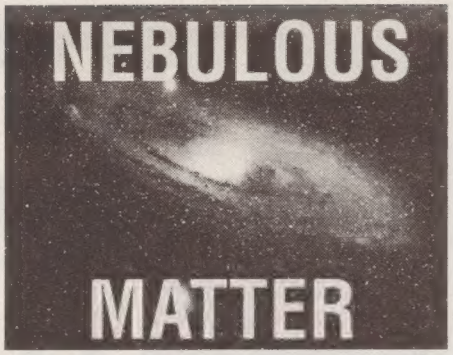
The National Science Fiction and Fantasy Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Canadian speculative works. The event was partially sponsored by H.B. Fenn and Company, Ltd.

Rumour: Connery wants to be Gandalf

Reuters New Service has reported that Sean Connery says he's waiting for a script for director Peter Jackson's The Lord Of The Rings.

There have been rumours that Connery could play Gandalf, but Jackson's team has consistently denied Connery's involvement in the project.

In addition, there have been rumours that Keanu Reeves has been petitioning Jackson's people to play Aragon.



Shadow Lands anthology out

The first major ShadowLands Press release, The Last Continent: New Tales of Zothique, is scheduled for this spring. The anthology clocks in at a whopping 440 pages.

With amazing new tales by some of today's hottest talent, such as: Henrik Johnsson, Jessica Amanda Salmonson and Gene Wolfe.

ShadowLands Press is also expected to release, Strange Attraction, an original anthology of new tales based on the shadowy sculptures of Lisa Snellings. Edited by the wonderful Ed Kramer, the anthology contains stories by Neil Gaiman, John Shirley and Michael Bishop. It is scheduled forrelease at the World Fantasy Convention.

NASA wants experiments

The Planetary Society and NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, wants young people worldwide to submit prototypes for the first student-designed experiment on Mars for A 2001 Mars Odyssey: The Student NanoExperiment Challenge.

Entrants must be pre-college, and under 18 on March 1, 1999. Deadline for proposal and prototype submission is July 31. The winning experiment will go on the Mars Surveyor Lander mission scheduled to blast off April 10, 2001 and reach Mars in January 2002.

For more info and entry materials, visit the competition's website:

http://planetary.org/learn/nanoexp.html

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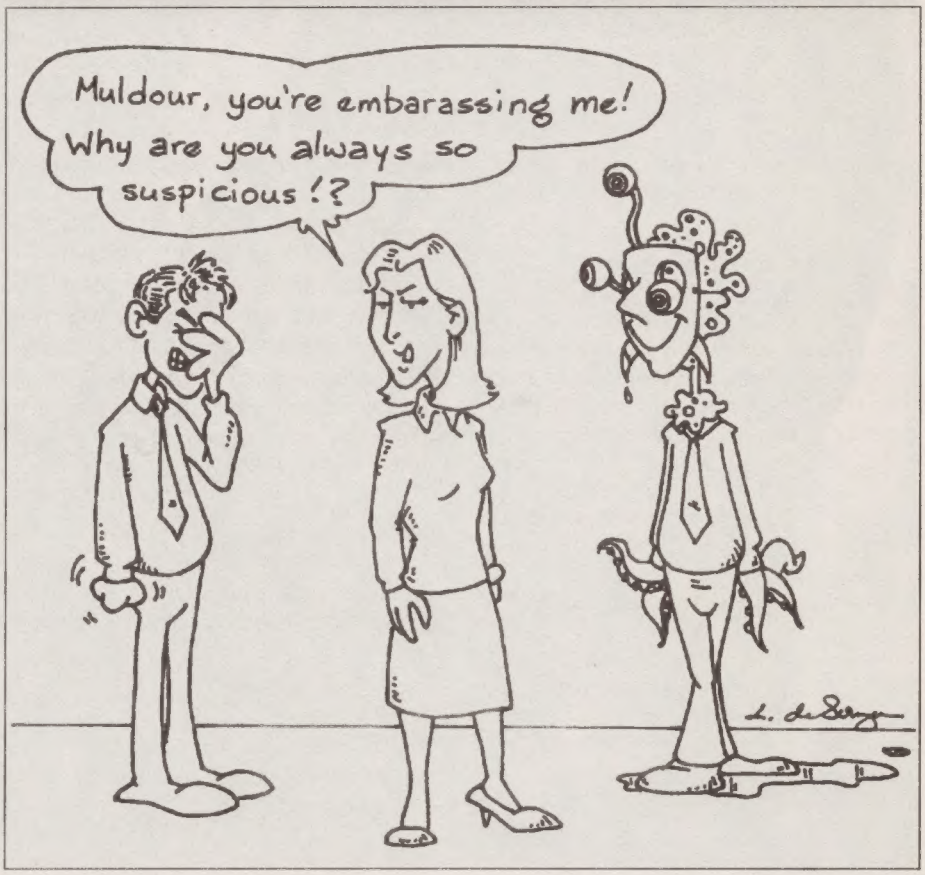

Lyta's winding path

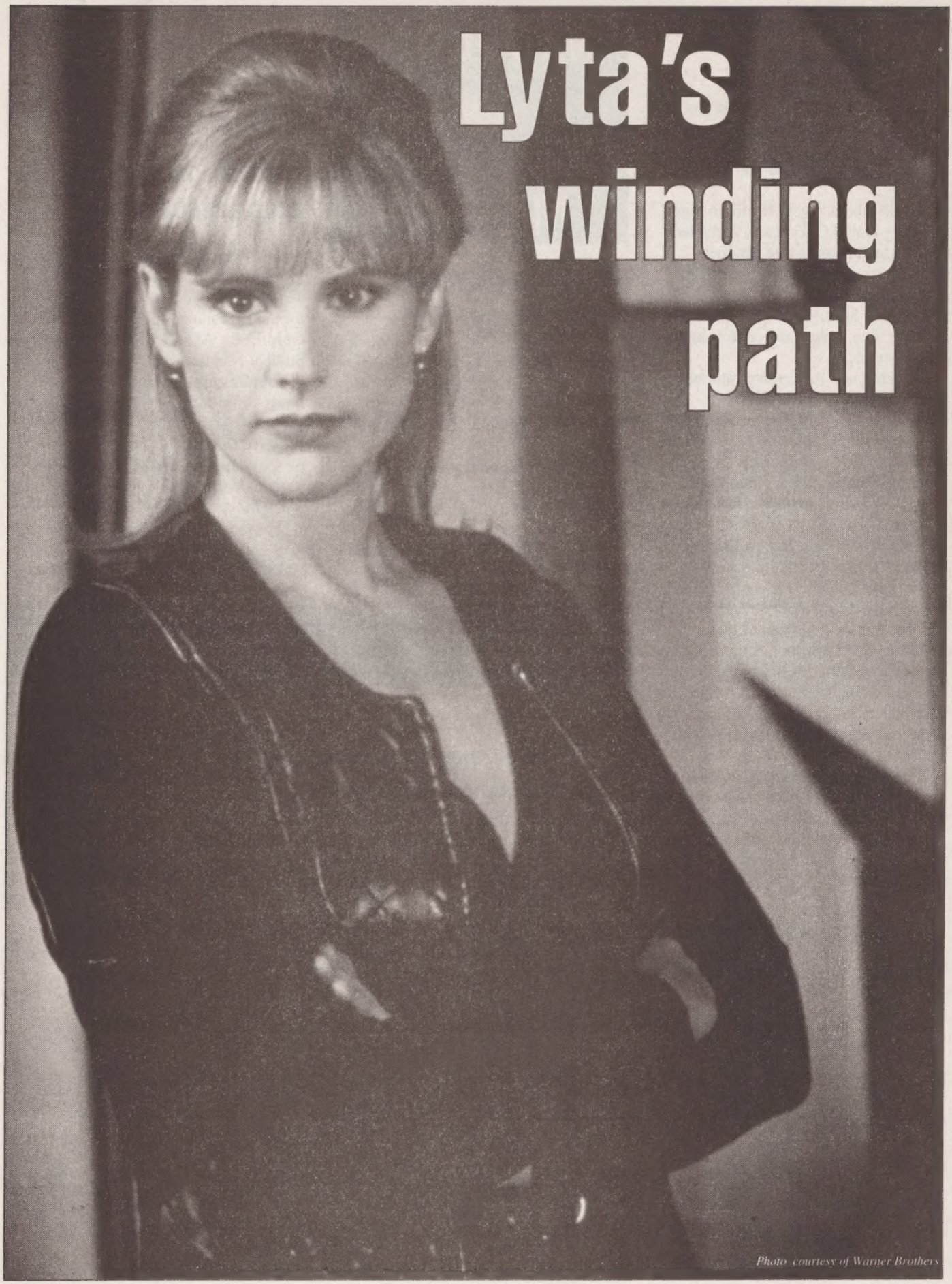

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

During five seasons Patricia Tallman wasn't always sure where Lyta was going, but she enjoyed the trip

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

In the space of a few years Patricia Tallman went from fighting the undead to fighting aliens and telepaths.

Tallman was in George Romero's remake version of The Night of the Living Dead when she caught the eye of Babylon 5 creator J. Michael Straczynski.

Straczynski was so impressed with her performance as Barbara in the movie that he created the role of telepath Lyta Alexander with her in mind.

"I went in to read for the producers and there was only one other actor sitting there . . . and we were both in our own worlds kind of thing when I realized this was unusual for the first round of auditions for a big project because they will see a lot of people," Tallman recalls.

"Then this huge man comes running into the room, shakes my hand and says, 'Patricia Tallman, I'm Joe Straczynski. I wrote the part for you, good luck' and he runs out again."

No, pressure. The rest of the audition was lost in a fog of disbelief.

In actuality, Straczynski patterned the character of Lyta on the character in the Romero movie — vulnerable, but strong when she had to be.

"I owe him a lot."

Of course, she nailed the part and was gainfully employed for five seasons. The role also offered her an opportunity to work in science fiction.

"Now, everyone wants to do science fiction, but when I got the script for Babylon 5, it was 'oh it's that culty kind of weird Star Trek s--t'," she chuckles. "But I was thrilled when I got the part because I always wanted to do science fiction."

For an avid reader of science fiction (she counts works by Canadians Robert Charles Wilson and Guy Gavriel Kay, as well as Orson Scott Card among her favourites), the role was a great opportunity.

It was also an opportunity for her to grow along with Lyta.

At the start, Tallman was left with little direction about where the character was going over the course of the series or any background on the character.

"I started at ground zero," she said."I was trying to figure out who this person was. And that's the fun part for me. I really enjoyed developing her background in my head before I talked to Joe (series creator, J. Michael Straczynski) and got the bible and heard what his story was on Lyta."

> "I spent a lot of time in his office, talking to him and trying to understand. He just kept saying 'I can't tell you everything, you have to trust me'."

Naturally, Tallman infused a lot of herself and her previous roles (such as Barbara from Night of the Living

Film credits

Movies

Ring of the Musketeers
Sweet Justice
Benefit of the Doubt
Army of Darkness
Austin Powers
Knightriders
Monkeyshines
Tales From the Dark Side
Creepshow II
Night of the Living Dead

Television

Guiding Light
Star Trek: The Next Generation
Star Runners

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

In taking on the role of Lyta Alexander, Patricia Tallman was taking on the challenge of playing a character that had been written with her (or at least a character she played in Night of the Living Dead) in mind.

Dead) into the role.

While Tallman was able to learn the background of Lyta Alexander when she took on the role, the character's progress during the course of the series turned out to be an evolution for the actress as well as her character.

"I wasn't told anything about where Lyta was going. Joe was very closed about that stuff," Tallman explained. "He kept his storyline so close to the vest. But I can see why he needed to do that."

As the show progressed, Tallman learned more about the character and her motivations. But even then, Tallman still struggled to get a handle on the character. "Later on, I learned things that Joe didn't want me to know, like she had interned with the Psi Corps," Tallman recalls. "I didn't know that in '93. I learned that in '98."

By not providing Tallman with a sense of the character's place or future in the Babylon 5 universe, the actress was able to bring that aspect through Lyta. In essence, she was learning along with her character.

"I think that's Lyta's whole problem. I don't think she ever knew where in the universe she belonged."

And Straczynski allowed her to grope her way through the process, especially when the series was reaching its climax.

"Joe kept telling me to trust him, because I was questioning him a lot during the whole telepath thing with Byron. I had a problem with Lyta's passivity," she recalled. "I didn't understand why she didn't fight for the telepaths or fight for Byron.

"I spent a lot of time in his office, talking to him and trying to understand. He just kept saying "I can't tell you everything, you have to trust me'."

The exercise proved to be a trial by fire for the character and, in a sense, for the actress who was responsible for taking the character to the next level.

When the series closed up shop last spring, Lyta was just going through the initial stages of dealing with her anger when she left the station.

"She's a time bomb.

"Now she's trying to decide what she's going to do and what she has to do to accomplish her goals and nothing better stand in her way," Tallman explained. "Her decency still comes through, but she's trying to squelch that."

And after all the questioning and all the doubt, Tallman looks back and says it was for the best.

"Joe is so brilliant, because there were times when I swear he took my dreams about the character. He just had a way of knowing where the character had to go."

But even though Tallman didn't know where her character was going, the same cannot be said for the veteran actress. She knew early on where her future lay.

At 15, Tallman was working in summer stock in Saugatuck, Mich., performing 10 shows in 11 weeks. After high school, she worked on her Master of Fine Arts degree at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University. While working on her degree, Tallman also appeared in 18 musicals with the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera.

"I got started right away, I knew what I wanted to be early on," she said. "I didn't know that I wanted to do it professionally, that it would become my life, but I knew I wanted to do it."

At Carngie Mellon, she also began a professional relationship with university alum director Tom Savini.

After college, Tallman appeared in some off-Broadway productions before landing roles on such soaps as Guilding Light, Texas and as undercover cop Christy Russell on Generations.

Continued on page 62

Character provides plum role for 'romantic'

Byron gave Robin Atkin Downes a chance to play an adventurous rogue

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

One of the major plot threads of the final season was the efforts of Byron and Lyta to push for the rights of telepaths who had been pawns in the Vorlons' machinations.

For an actor with a fondness for the Romantics, the role of Byron on Babylon 5 was a plum.

For eight episodes, Robin Atkin Downes portrayed the leader of the rogue telepaths on the series. It was a character that offered many of the same characteristics that one attributes to the poet who shares the name — adventurous, intense, cultured and philosophical.

"I have a background in the classics and I really enjoy playing such a passionate character with such a wonderful language as Byron," he explained.

"I enjoy working on science fiction series like Babylon 5 because the writing is very heightened and poetic and very Shakespearian," he says.

Originally, the character was only supposed to last for five episodes and then depart, "but it turned out to be a lot bigger than I thought it'd be."

A native of Weybridge, England, Downes grew up in such British cities as Rustington, St Ives and Worplesdon, as well as on Corsica, before finally settling down in Southern California.

When he was 12, Downes moved to the Los Angeles area to live with his mother.

It was there that the acting bug became a raging infection. The profession is something of a minor tradition in the Downes family — his grandmother was an actress in England.

By his own accounts, Downes began his acting career while attending boarding school at the tender age of six. In California, he continued to perform in secondary school.

Downes acted while he attended college in San Diego, where he performed his first professional gig with a role in Peter Schaffer's Equus.

He studied for two years at the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts, after which he travelled to Philadelphia and spent two years working on his masters degree in Fine Arts at Temple University.

While in Philadelphia, Downes appeared in the Stephen Sondheim musical, Assassins, and a production of Road by Jim Cartwright. But he returned to Los Angeles in quest for work in television or the theatre.

And he found it

He's appeared in a handful of independent films and as the "Snakeman" in Buffy the Vampire Slayer. But it is on Babylon 5 where Downes has achieved cult status.

"I hadn't been in Los Angeles that long and I was just starting my television and film career and to get a nice recur-

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ring character on a great series was exciting," Downes recalls.

Of course, coming in near the end of the series' five-year story arc meant that the character's lifespan was inevitably short.

"It would have been nice not to die, but I sort of believe that Byron is not dead. That he just created that illusion," Downes says of his character's demise. "But then I would like to believe that wouldn't I?"

Initially, he auditioned to play a Centauri. Even though he was passed over for the part, Downes had made enough of an impression that he was called back for another part, Morann.

I enjoy working on science fiction series like Babylon 5 because the writing is very heightened and poetic and very Shakespearian

Hidden under a robe and prosthetics, Downes appeared as a member of the Grey Council in the episode, Atonement. While the prosthetics hid his features for the episode, it also enabled him to be cast later in the series.

With production on Babylon 5 completed, Downes taped a guest appearance as a sleazy photographer on Beverly Hills 90210 and completed work on a movie entitled, Werewolf Reborn.

In the movie, which takes its cue from Goosebumps, Downes played the tortured man/werewolf.

He's also been busy on the convention circuit where he has a chance to gauge the reaction to his character.

"It's pretty overwhelming," he said. "There's always a moment at every convention where I'm amazed at the support and the amount of fans that there are at these conventions.

"It's great for the show and it's really wonderful to have all that support and be acknowledged for your work.

"It's rare that you get that as an actor."

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

The concept of a religion that was literal rather than metaphorical provided the framework for the episode, Day of the Dead, where members of the crew spend time with some of their lost comrades.

Lengthy dinner debt leads to script

Author Neil Gaiman's affinity for the mythic isn't relegated to the printed page. During Babylon 5's final season, he contributed the script for the episode Day of the Dead.

"What attracted me to Babylon 5 was that it was one big story and one person's story and it went somewhere."

In Gaiman's story, the station awaits the arrival of the universally famous comedy team of Rebo and Zooty. The Brakiri negotiate to buy a portion of Babylon 5 to celebrate a religious holiday, the Day of the Dead, that brings old friends and enemies to the station. During this time of isolation, Garibaldi, Lennier, Londo and Capt. Lochley are accidentally shut away with them. Morden, Dodger, Adira, Tyree and others who come back to life for 24 hours.

"I loved the idea of an alien religion and I loved the idea of humanity taking something as a metaphor that was intended completely literally."

The work was the culmination of a couple of years of talks, dinners with creator J. Michael Straczynski and series consultant Harlan Ellison.

Straczynski had interviewed Gaiman during a signing tour for Good Omens, a book he wrote with Terry Pratchett. The interview led to a request to contribute to the series and regular dinner appointments whenever Gaiman was in Los Angeles.

"The amount of guilt (over the dinner cheques) that built up meant that I had to write an episode."

With the end came closure for Koenig

For the better part of five seasons, Walter Koenig relished his role as the dreaded telepath, Bester.

And with the role, came a feeling that he didn't get with his other better-known character, Pavel Chekov.

Koenig's frustration with Chekov stems from the treatment of his character.

"I felt there was more that could be done with the character," Koenig explained. "When the show was cancelled it felt like there was unfinished business left."

The Star Trek movies, the Chicago native said, provided an opportunity to finish this business by exploring the character and provide a sense of closure that was missing from the end of the original series.

"Number six (The Undiscovered Country) could have provided that closure," Koenig said. "But it didn't."

So he and James Doohan joined William Shatner for Star Trek: Generations. Even then, the closure he sought for the character was missing.

Kirk disappears, while Chekov and Scotty look on. Fade to black.

Even though the original series has been in syndication for years, for a younger generation of science fiction fans he is better known as Alfred Bester of Babylon 5 — the latest in a number of science fiction roles that he has had over the course of his career.

Between Star Trek and Babylon 5 were a number for guest starring roles in a number of series, including two episodes of the Canadian-made science fiction television footnote, The Starlost (he played Oro).

The recurring Babylon 5 character is as far removed from his first regular series role, Chekov, as day is removed from night.

On Babylon 5, he spent a great deal of time trying to rein in the aspirations of Commander Sheridan and the other members of the far-flung space station.

It was a role that demanded a certain type of villain, a manipulator, a scheming government agent. It was also a role Koenig clearly enjoyed.

"I don't think that there is such a thing as a character who is entirely evil," Koenig said of Bester. "Even if the character is doing evil things, he is doing what he believes is right."

But the potential of the character wasn't the only thing that attracted Koenig to the series. The talent behind the camera was also a selling point for him.

"There were some very talented people involved in Babylon 5," he explained. "Michael Straczynski created a wonderful world and fascinating characters and it was a pleasure to be part of it."

With the story arc already established by the time he came on the scene, Koenig explained that Straczynski already had the basics of the character in place. But over the course of the seasons, Koenig was able to emboss Bester with some of himself.

And this time, when the series ended its run, Koenig had the sense of closure he felt was lacking 29 years ago.

☆

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Tracy Scoggins
Total Recall 2070
Earth Final Conflict's
Richard Chevolleau
author Robin Hobb
and some kick-*%$# fiction!!

The mythic pushes the Crow skyward

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

The season was in the midst of winding down for Bryce Zabel.

He was busy tying up loose ends for the season finale of The Crow: Stairway to Heaven and looking forward to another season when we spoke.

We decided to broaden the show out by embracing the embedded metaphysical concepts that are in the Crow mythology.

After producing three television series in Canada (Kay O'Brien, MANTIS and now The Crow), Zabel and his writing partner, Brad Markowitz, consider themselves honourary Canadians. Zabel's first professional sale was a two-hour script that marked the creation of the Toronto-based series ENG.

The two remained consultants during the series entire run. Now they operate behind the scenes on the Crow: Stairway to Heaven series.

Zabel doesn't sound like the run-of-the-mill executive producer. Rather than talk strictly about set designs, production costs and other practical aspects of the Vancouver-based production, there are moments when he sounds like a theologian.

"We decided to broaden the show out by embracing the embedded metaphysical concepts that are in the Crow mythology," he explained. "The crow carries a spirit back to the land of the

dead, that seems to go back to Indian mythology.

"Death is not necessarily the end of existence. Death is a semi-permeable membrane, if you will, that people go back and forth as they want.'

The show has already been renewed for a second season.

"We've been very successful. In fact, we've exceeded expectations in audience," Zabel said from his California office.

The success has come despite a lack of promotion and some erratic scheduling (a problem in the syndication market) which made attracting a broad section of viewers all the more difficult.

But unlike other series, The Crow: Stairway to Heaven had the benefit of a motion picture providing instant recognition.

"The feature film is a bright shining moment and the series is its own bright shining moment, but it does deal with many of the same issues."

Even with the instant recognition the movies provide, Zabel said there are also cautionary notes that have to be considered.

"It's a powerful, powerful piece of material to adapt. Obviously, the original feature film was a very powerful vision that was amplified by the tragedy surrounding the film," Zabel said in reference to the accidental death of lead actor Brandon Lee.

"Because our plan was to follow the Eric Draven story line, we would run into the

Revenge is gone, now the crow wants redemption

very issue that dealt with the Brandon Lee tragedy.

"And let's face it, it's a very dark film. It's dark in set design, it's dark in tone."

The film's ending, when Lee returns and kills the people responsible for his and his girlfriend's deaths, also made it difficult to base an entire 22-episode series strictly on the movie.

"Obviously, something has to change when you go to a series. So rather than do a series about revenge and vengeance, we did a series about redemption . . . the stairway to Heaven."

And unlike the feature films — a third one is in production in Salt Lake City, Ut., — the series has introduced a number of different crows besides the lead character of Eric Draven.

"It's not the same character dressed up differently every week," Zabel said. "It's the story of one man's journey, but every episode is a discovery and he's different every week, depending on what he learned the previous week."

It is clear in talking to Zabel, that the metaphysical aspects of the crow mythos have long appealed to him.

Photo courtesy of Space: the Imagination Station

Adapting a powerful movie such as the Crow offered a number of challenges for producers and writers of the Crow: Stairway to Heaven. But their approach broadened the mythological elements of the story.

Zabel had been interested in adapting the film to television long before the current production became a reality.

But while the movie's producers and another company negotiated, Zabel went off and created Dark Skies. As Dark Skies parted network television, the opportunity to produce the Crow arose and Zabel decided to take it on

"I think that what sold them (Polygram which produces the series) on me is that I told them that I would be guided by the notion that even a dead person needs a life," Zabel joked ☆

WATCH CROW: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

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Cutting-edge technology, classic tale

A daunting task faces Filmline International and Tailisman Crest in their production studios in downtown Montreal.

The group has completed work on the first season of the series, The Adventures of Jules Verne, and they know they have to overcome a viewer recognition factor that could create problems for the series.The plots of his novels provide a thread for the series, but thanks to films, there are some viewer biases to deal with.

"There's a whole generation of people who saw Around the World in 80 Days," explained Michael Mullally who served as producer during the series' early days. "There is a sort of preconception for people who have watched the movie, so we needed to sidestep that a bit.

"And our way of doing that is to do it (the series) from the point of view of a young Jules Verne."

The hour-long episodes follow the exploits of a 21-year-old Verne and three friends. The foursome must also defeat the machinations of the League of Darkness — which includes vampires, demons and aliens.

The main cast is composed of Michael Praed as Phileas Fogg, Francesca Hunt as Rebecca Fogg, Michael Courtemanche as Passepartout and Chris Demetral as Verne.

While the British-trained Praed and Hunt and American Demetral were found through a four-month long casting process,. Montreal-based actor Courtemanche gained the role as the result of a stroke of luck.

Photo courtesy of and © Filmline International

Chris Demetral plays a young Jules Verne who is journeying across the globe with people who will later become the characters in his novels.

"I bumped into him in a bar. He was drunk out of his mind and I said 'he will make the perfect Passepartout'," he joked.

Of course, these characters will remind viewers of Around the World in 80 Days. Such a reality has been recognized by the producers — Mullally notes that the main character in the 1958 movie was named Phineas Fogg, while in the series, Verne is accompanied by Phileas Fogg.

Adding to the challenges for the production is the quality of the special effects needed to make Verne's fantasy world come to life.

"The show has a huge visual effects component," said Mullally. "We try to design that into every episode."

During the course of the series, the quartet will travel to locales that will serve to provide the fodder for such novels as Journey to the Centre of the Earth, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and Around the World in 80 Days. To make these adventures realistic requires a myriad of special effects.

Making things easier, has been the move to include members of the post-production team early in the process.

"We include the post-production people in our thinking, so we just don't come back with a load of footage and dump it in their laps," Mullally explained.Making the production possible is the 100,000-square-foot Montreal studio where the companies have set up shop. The block-long former railway building houses three sound stages and one of the largest green-screen stages on the continent, as well as a self-contained production facility.

The special effects department has become the domain of someof the top special effects people this side of the border. The facility allows the series to be filmed and processed entirely onsite, as

well it also allows the company to accommodate feature films when the series isn't in production.

The facility also allows the series to be filmed utilizing HD (High-Definition) technology. This has placed the series on the cutting edge of media technology.

Being filmed using HD technology has proved a boon for the company in technologically savvy Japan.

"They're thrilled that there is a series that's HD," said Mullally. "They have a whole network set up for HD and there's no programming for it.

The series will demonstrate the potential of HD-TV to people in the industry.

"People will begin to realize that if they want to catch up, they're going to have to switch to a digital signal and HD is sort of the king of the digital signal.

Photo courtesy of and © Filmline International

A Confederate soldier is suspended in front of a green screen at the Montreal special effects shop. When the finished product hits television, the soldier will be sailing through the air.

Special-effects master driven by desire to scare people

When he was a boy, Xavier Oliver took great delight in applying make-up or home-made props to his hands and scare his mother.

"I would hide under her bed and then grab her feet," he recalls.

More than 20 years later, Oliver makes a career out of leaving body parts in restaurants and creating half-finished bodies and aliens from scratch.

Now Oliver and his company, Texa FX Group, are part of the team that is bringing Jules Verne's world of fantasy to television.

But enjoying giving a good scare was not enough of a push to get Oliver to pursue a career in special effects. It took two separate incidents in the late '70s: Star Wars and Kiss: Alive II.

"A friend of mine gave me the album. And I just saw these weird guys dressed up and felt 'Oh wow, that's cool'."

Thanks to his father's Super 8 camera, Oliver and some friends got their first crack at making films.

"Actually, the films were very bad," he said with a chuckle.

But this wasn't the case for long. Oliver pursued a degree in filmmaking and film studies. As a prospective director, Oliver spent a great deal of time developing the special effects for his student films — too much time as it turns out.

"I spent so much time on the special effects, that I didn't have time to do the film," Oliver said. "But I had the special effects done."

His classmates, recognizing his talents, often asked Oliver to construct the special effects for their projects.

Again, it took a bit of a push to get Oliver to follow his strength: this time it was watching the Exorcist and a marathon of Hammer Studios films on a Montreal television station that finally made the difference.

After receiving some tutoring from a friend who worked at the CBC, Oliver asked Dick Smith (special effects coordinator on the Exorcist and the Godfather) for permission to take his course.

There he learned the techniques of special effects makeup and prothestics.

It was an experience that allowed him to tackle the special effects for a theatrical production, La Brute, where he had to transform one of the characters into a deformed being.

From there he moved on to a variety of television series — including an anthology where he had to compose a "Monster of the Week" —a number of music videos, commercials, some low-budget movies and then the YTV/Nickelodeon production, Space Cases.

There he composed "The Alien of the Week." But by this time, he had a crew of five artists under his guidance.

With half the crew on the set and the

Continued on page 62

A Dream Come True

Nicole deBoer becomes the latest Dax in the Star Trek universe

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

In a short time, Torontonian Nicole deBoer has made a sizable mark in science fiction. Her latest role landed her on her long-time favourite — Star Trek.

As the final season of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine draws to a close, its latest addition, Nicole de Boer, considers the foundation of her character, Lt. Ezri Dax, the Trill counselor.

"I think there is definitely a bit of Nicole in Ezri," deBoer says, adding that almost every role she's had during the past few years has her either putting a bit of herself into the part or finding some aspect of her own personality popping out.

Before coming on board DS9, deBoer's most recent genre-related role was that of Yuna in YTV's Deepwater Black series (Mission Genesis in the U.S.) produced by Empire Entertainment of Toronto. The series, based on Ken Catran's young adult sf trilogy, followed the adventures of the clone crew members of a deep space ark who are charged with re-populating the solar system after it has been devastated by plague.

DeBoer also had a leading role in The Outer Limits episode "Monster" as an esper unwillingly involved in a secret government project to use psionics for assassination.

But she credits Deepwater Black, and the Canadian series, Beyond Reality, which featured Shari Belafonte as part of a paranormal investigation team, with helping prepare her for the jump into the Star Trek universe.

"Definitely. Even going back beyond sci-fi to what's more fantasy. Beyond Reality was my first dose of having to say a lot of technobabble. I did so even more on that show, I would say, than I have so far on Deep Space Nine because I'm a counselor on Deep Space Nine.

"So going from that job to Deepwater Black, where I was on a ship but it was a civilian ship, but you still get the same sort of similar sense. And all of that helped me a lot as an actor preparing for this."

Beyond Reality and Deepwater Black broke the rules in being half-hour sf dramas. The television norm for serious science-fiction is hour-long episodes while sf-lite from My Favourite Martian to Third Rock from the Sun has occupied half-hour slots. Beyond Reality and Deepwater Black also featured small ensemble casts. Deepwater focused almost entirely on the

crew of the space ark with an occasional rare guest star gracing a couple episodes.

Joining Deep Space Nine, though, with its hour-long format and larger cast for the writers to play with hasn't resulted in a "free ride" for deBoer.

"Well, presently I can't say it's easier," deBoer says, smiling, "because I'm still in the middle of the writers really loving Ezri's character right now and I haven't stopped working for a long time. So I can't really say." She giggled.

I never expected to be on a Star Trek show. It came as a really nice surprise to get the part.

"There was a time I remember where I got time off on this show but I haven't seen it for awhile.

"You know what I really liked about Deepwater? I love being in the whole institution of Star Trek. But that's exactly what it is, is an institution, with fairly strict rules to follow.

"And the great thing about Mission Genesis is that it was sort of an original thing. I loved the idea about us being clones and young people in space and I thought it had a lot of originality to it.

"And we were freer. Like I say, it wasn't a military (based series). Neither was there a station. We just felt freer to do different things.

"Whereas there are a lot of rules you have to follow on Star Trek and being on a Star Trek show. Precedents that have been set and things that have been set by Mr. Roddenberry. So you just feel like there's a lot more rules, you know, that you have to stay by. Which is fine. It's just a little more constricting in comparison to a show like Deepwater Black."

But being part of the Star Trek universe is still a dream come true for deBoer who watched the original series on reruns.

"I loved Capt. Kirk and I thought Spock was very sexy," she says. "I watched Star Trek: The Next Generation fairly regularly and I thought Capt. Picard was very sexy.

"And then someone blessed me and I ended up on a Star Trek show."

Deepwater Black (Mission Genesis to some) offered the writers and actors more freedom, than the institution of Star Trek, says Nicole deBoer who played Yuna in the Canadian series.

DeBoer's previous Star Trek experience is not limited to her own viewing of the various series. There's her aunt, for instance, the other Trekker in the family who, when she heard about de Boer's new role, sat her niece down and explained all about Dax and "the worm" character.

"She's very proud and very thrilled about her only niece."

Then there was that unexpected face-to-face meeting when deBoer was auditioning for a guest spot on the Tekwar series shot in Toronto.

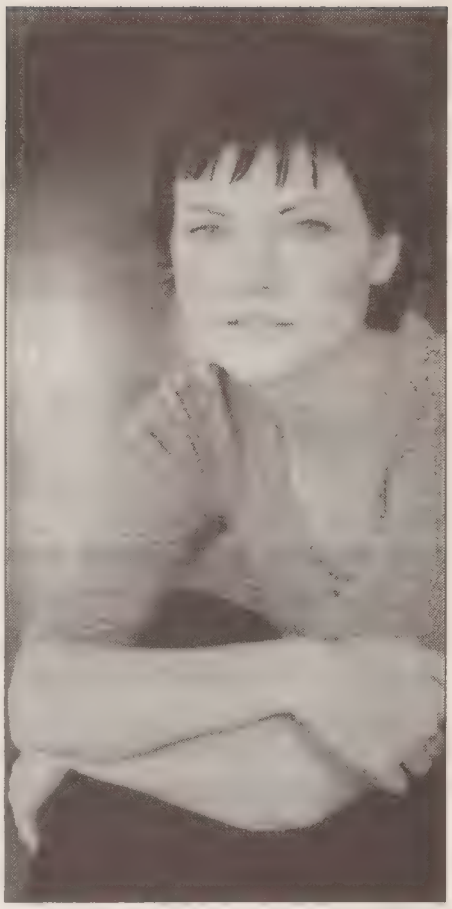
"I walked into this room to do the audition and there was this guy sitting there wearing sunglasses and a cap. I looked through the sunglasses and I realized it was William Shatner (Tekwar creator). And I screamed."

She apologized right away for her fan reaction. "He laughed and said, 'That's OK.'"

Still, deBoer agrees that going from Deepwater Black to a starring role in Deep Space Nine is a big jump for her career.

"It's a huge jump and I'm glad I had the sci-fi background to help me out where I am now. It came as a big sur-

The great thing about Mission Genesis is that it was sort of an original thing. I loved the idea about us being clones and young people in space and I thought it had a lot of originality to it.



prise. I never expected to be on a Star Trek show. It came as a really nice surprise to get the part."

The newcomer who admitted to feeling "overwhelmed" when she first stepped onto Paramount's Deep Space Nine set, "one of the biggest sets that never changes," now jokes about how she still gets lost sometimes on the Promenade Deck in between her own performances during shooting sessions.

"Long days, very long days," she says, laughing, "but working with great people all the time.

"The people are what make it. Because, I mean, once you're inside and you're on the set, you can be anywhere really, in my mind. The sets are much more elaborate and cost a lot more than sets I've been on before. But once you're actually working and in the scene, to me, it's just about your fellow actors and your director. And I've had a really good time with that so that makes up for the long, grueling hours."

Coming on board DS9 as a main character during the final season doesn't bother deBoer since, as she points out, the writers have taken every opportunity they can to bring Ezri into the storyline, even if it's only for a brief cameo appearance.

"I feel that I fit in fine and I don't mind that it's the last season."

DeBoer also didn't freak herself out at the beginning about taking over Terry Farrell's role.

"I worried more about knowing my lines and doing my best job as an actor."

That and preparing her own perception of someone with eight lifetimes worth of experience. When she went for her screen test, deBoer asked lots of questions about Trills in general and Ezri Dax in particular.

Paramount also provided her with tapes of past episodes featuring Jadzia Dax but deBoer was a bit leery of paying too much attention to the tapes in case she began to subconsciously copy Farrell's version. What deBoer studied were the scenes showing Jadzia's interactions with the other characters such as Capt. Sisko and Quark so she could work that aspect of the old Dax into the role of Ezri.

One thing the people in charge of the series made clear to deBoer was that Ezri Dax is a counselor who has access to the memories of the symbiont's seven other incarnations, not someone with multiple personality syndrome — not the Star Trek version of Sybil.

"They stressed to me that they didn't want that, they didn't want somebody with multiple personalities. They didn't want that feeling. It's just, you know, memories.

"It's been the same for anyone else. For Jadzia, it was the same situation. It's just that she (Ezri) wasn't prepared for it. Anybody who has Dax has all those memories, that's the great thing about having the symbiont. But they didn't want me to act like somebody with multiple personalities, they just, I think they enjoyed my freshness that I brought to it, my sense of comedy, maybe, that I have.

"So I didn't do a whole lot of preparing. I just knew that I wanted to, hopefully, bring a freshness to the show that maybe you can only bring if you're just being somebody new at it.

"Fresh" is one way to describe Ezri Dax. Bubbly, cheerful and good-hearted also fit. DeBoer says the character does a lot of evolving as the season progresses to its end.

"I think that there's a very interesting arc that's going to happen for Ezri and I think that, at the beginning, she certainly comes across as almost ditzy, almost flakey because it's very new, the Joining, for her. And it's really difficult for her.

"And although, of course, her core is a good person, a nice person, I don't

There are a lot of rules you have to follow on Star Trek and being on a Star Trek show. Precedents that have been set and things that have been set by Mr. Roddenberry. So you just feel like there's a lot more rules, you know, that you have to stay by. Which is fine.

think you'll see as much of the ditziness as times goes on, as she matures and gets used to having the symbiont. I think that you'll see her grow and definitely become more in control of the situation. We've already shot some episodes where you get to meet her family and you learn a bit more about Ezri's actual background, which is interesting, I think."

In many ways DS9's Ezri Dax seems the opposite of Deepwater Black's Yuna. DeBoer laughs at the suggestion.

"She (Yuna) definitely was a lot stronger a character. The similarities are that both of them speak what they think. It's just that Yuna was a lot tougher and stronger whereas Ezri is a little more self-deprecating and a little more unsure.

"She (Ezri) brings out a lot in the other characters too. That's another thing I like about her."

DeBoer says fan reaction to her has been positive. Even though the role of Dax is one viewers are familiar with, like Worf, they are coming to realize that Ezri Dax is not Jadzia Dax.

"It's very understandable for me to hear that the fans are very sad to see Jadzia go and are a little opposed to having a new Dax. That totally makes sense to me.

"But I think, for the most part, everybody's been really positive and welcoming to me as far as the fans go and sending me letters welcoming me and thinking that I'm doing a really good job and that's really nice. Because it is hard to come into a situation like that where you know that the fans are going to be missing the old character."

One time after finishing a shoot deBoer popped into a 7-Eleven looking for a copy of a T.V. magazine which was supposed to have an article about her arrival on the series. She had done a partial job of removing her Trill spots makeup but it had left a series of brown streaks down the sides of her face. A guy in the store who must have seen many Trek actors motoring around town after work took one look at her and said, "Hey, Deep Space Nine, right?" which made her feel pretty good.

"Except for being seen with the streaks," she said with a rueful smile.

But after wearing the trill spots for a season, deBoer is now part of Star Trek lore. The role has heightened her profile in Hollywood and will, no doubt lead to more work south of the border.

But there is one more reason why she's glad to be a part of Deep Space Nine even during its last season.

"I'm just happy to be part of Star Trek and I'm happy to be part of a genre that has such loyal fans."

☆

Sawyer, Wilson lead Canadian Hugo squad

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA — Canadians Robert J. Sawyer, Robert Charles Wilson, Nalo Hopkinson and Julie Czerneda are among the finalists for Hugo Awards and the John W. Campbell Award.

Sawyer's Factoring Humanity is on the ballot in the novel category, where it is joined by Wilson's Darwinia. Wilson is also a finalist in the novetta category for "Divided by Infinity." Hopkinson and Czerneda are finalists for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

The awards will be presented at Aussiecon 3, the 57th annual World Science Fiction Convention, in Melbourne, Aust., Sept. 2-6.

The Hugo finalists are:

NOVEL

Children of God, Mary Doria Russell
Darwinia Robert Charles Wilson
Distraction Bruce Sterling
Factoring Humanity, Robert J. Sawyer
To Say Nothing of the Dog, Connie Willis

NOVELLA

"Aurora in Four Voices", Catherine Asaro (Analog. Dec 1998)
"Get Me to the Church On Time", Terry Bisson (Asimov's May 1998)
"Oceanic", Greg Egan (Asimov's Aug 1998)
"Story of Your Life", Ted Chiang (Starlight 2 Tor Nov 1998)
"The Summer Isles", Ian R. MacLeod (Asimov's Oct/Nov 1998)

NOVELETTE

"Divided by Infinity", Robert Charles Wilson (Starlight 2 Tor Nov 1998)
"Echea", Kristine Kathryn Rusch (Asimov's Jul 1998)
"The Planck Dive", Greg Egan (Asimov's Feb 1998)
"Steamship Soldier on the Information Front", Nancy Kress (Future Histories 1997; Asimov's Apr 1998)
"Taklamakan", Bruce Sterling (Asimov's Oct/Nov 1998)
"Time Gypsy", Ellen Klages (Bending the Landscape: Science Fiction Overlook Sep 1998)
"Zwarte Piet's Tale", Allen Steele (Analog Dec 1998)

SHORT STORY

"Cosmic Corkscrew", Michael A. Burstein (Analog June 1998)
"Maneki Neko", Bruce Sterling (F&SF May 1998)
"Radiant Doors", Michael Swanwick (Asimov's Sept. 1998)
"The Very Pulse of the Machine", Michael Swanwick (Asimov's Feb 1998)
"Whiptail", Robert Reed (Asimov's Oct/Nov 1998)
"Wild Minds", Michael Swanwick (Asimov's May 1998)

RELATED BOOKS

The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World, Thomas M. Disch (The Free Press)
The Hugo, Nebula & World Fantasy Awards, Howard DeVore (Advent:Publishers)
Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years, Everett F. Bleiler (Kent State University Press)

Continued on page 62

In June: head for parsec.on.ca

'Uncle Owen' reveals hardship of blacklist

Actor Phil Brown was chased from Hollywood to England by the McCarthy withchunt

By
KANDIS WEINER

Photo by Troy Van Honey

Shelagh Fraser and Phil Brown were among the Star Wars veterans who were kept busy signing autographs at a recent Montreal convention. The two (below) in their best-known roles as Owen and Beru Lars in Star Wars: A New Hope. Pictured with them is some guy named Skywalker.

In a Montreal convention room where fans lined up to meet Uncle Owen, Aunt Beru, Boba Fett, and Darth Vader, all in their senior years. Uncle Owen (Phil Brown) sat at a table with Aunt Beru, (Shelagh Fraser), I questioned Phil Brown about his career and role in Star Wars.

With the Phantom Menace in theatres this spring and Uncle Owen providing one of the bridges between this trilogy and the first Star Wars movie, fans were waiting to see him.

> They said I was a communist. I wasn't. But that didn't make any difference to them.

Brown is 82 years old. near deaf and definitely testy. It is no wonder he was selected to play the strict guardian of the young Skywalker. Brown revealed the difficulties he faced during the 1940s and 50s in Hollywood, which perhaps refined his curmudgeonly character.

"Did you hear of a period called the McCarthy Era in America?", asks Brown, explaining his 40 year exile from the United States. "Well, I was a victim of that, so I couldn't work in America anymore. They said I was a communist. I wasn't. But that didn't make any difference to them."

The infamous Hollywood blacklist ruined the careers of many young writers, actors and directors. The House Committee on Un-American Activities forced witnesses like Brown to choose between ratting on their friends or working.

"It was guilt by association. I knew lots of communists and I liked them. I decided I didn't want to be one, but that was my business and their business. And I refused to denounce them because they were my friends."

Fortunately, Phil had established a reputation in England from performances in London's West End theatre district. After his last flight there, some 40-years ago, Brown stayed.

"I couldn't work there (Hollywood) and I could work in London. So I stayed."

Phil remained in exile for more than 40 years, acting in various West End plays, movies, and directing. Although the part he played in Star Wars was relatively minor, it is the one he is most well known for.

Phil finally returned from his exile in the UK just five years ago. He's back in Hollywood. Apart from the occasional convention trip, Phil is taking it easy. "I'm retired. I'm old. I don't want to act anymore."

☆

Photo TM and © of Lucasfilm Ltd.

Jusko: bringing masterpieces to comics

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

Joe Jusko is one of those artists whose talents transcend their medium.

Jusko, who' just finished a three-issue run on the Black Panther comic book, creates masterpieces that seem ill-suited for comic books — this is not snobbishness, he's just that good.

Other comic book artists command between $50 and $75 for a page of their work — a hot artist, perhaps $200.

Jusko's paintings, on the other hand, bring upwards of $5,000 US (although a painting of Terri Hatcher has an asking price of $1,000 US at one gallery).

He has created covers for such magazines as Heavy Metal and Frank Frazetta Fantasy Illustrated.

"I did the Savage Sword of Conan covers for Marvel for 10 years or so," Jusko recalled recently. "I became known as the Conan guy for a long time. Then I shied away from Conan and did anything but Conan just to show that I could do other stuff."

Jusko is known as one of the best painters to grace the comics industry. His work can be seen in such card sets as Marvel Masterpieces I — which is considered the genesis for a trend toward realistic renditions of comic characters.

"I did basically every character that Marvel has for posters and trading cards," he said.

Jusko has also put his artistic talents to work on the Visions of Vampirella card and the Edgar Rice Burroughs card sets.

It is Jusko's work on Tarzan that has netted him a measure of renown among fans and his peers. His work on the ape man has been both prolific and awe-inspiring.

His style is reminiscent of Burne Hogarth's work in such classic books as Sparkler Comics — but Jusko's version of Tarzan is much more lush and vibrant than the work of his predecessor.

"I like doing the reality-based characters, the Conan, Tarzan-type stuff" Jusko said. "I can do the guys in capes if I have to.

"But I'm much more comfortable doing the characters who are somewhat based on reality."

Parsec Photo

After breaking into the comic industry at an early age, Joe Jusko has gained fan favour for his realistic portrayals of fantasy and superheroes alike.

It was the work of another artist who worked on a later version of Tarzan that inspired Jusko to become an artist.

"I was eight years old and I bought a copy of Avengers 57 drawn by John Buscema. His work just blew me away," Jusko explained. "He's been my major inspiration since I was a kid."

Almost a decade after Jusko made that purchase he ran into another famed artist, Howard Chaykin, in a comic shop in New York City. Chaykin was looking for an assistant to help him with a backlog of work and, after seeing some samples of Jusko's work,

> "I like doing the reality-based characters, the Conan, Tarzan-type stuff . . . I'm much more comfortable doing the characters who are somewhat based on reality."

hired the 17 year old.

"I broke into the business fairly early," Jusko added.

But despite his long-time attraction to comic books, Jusko decided against following Busema and Chaykin into the business — or at least follow in their footsteps.

"I decided that I wanted total control over what the work looked like, so I switched over to painting," he explained, adding that his attention span isn't ideal for an artist who must draw several pages per day and meet a tight deadline.

"This prompted me to do single pieces and then move on to something else."

But doing the reality-based artwork is a more painstaking process than simply drawing guys in capes.

Jusko explains that once he has an idea for a particular piece, he draws thumbnail sketches to ensure that the subjects are positioned properly.

Once satisfied with the sketches, Jusko goes through his files to find photos of the animals, people, etc. that will be in the artwork. Having a reference file of photos was one of the lessons that the younger Jusko learned while working as Chaykin's assistant. Now he has file cabinets filled with reference material.

"If you are going to draw a lion, then you better know what one looks like," he said. "Because when people see the artwork, they may not know what's wrong with it. But they'll know the lion isn't right because they've seen it.

"If you're drawing a dragon, you can sort of wing that because no one has ever seen a dragon."

But even after 20 remarkable years in the industry, Jusko still idolizes the artist who inspired him to take up a brush.

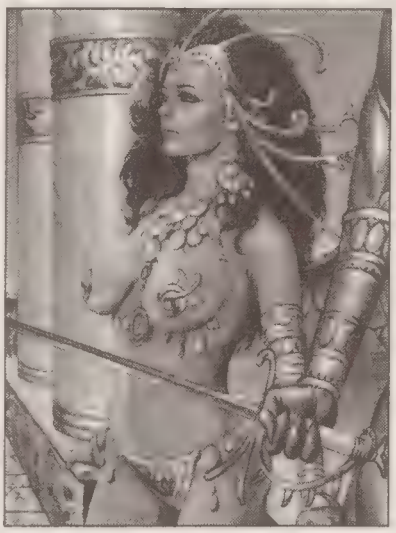
Even though he has inked and painted over some of his idol's work, Jusko has never met Buscema — except for a brief moment in the offices of Marvel Comics in 1979. But the awestruck newcomer was too afraid to say anything.

"Our paths have never crossed again in 20 years. God, I'd love to meet him and talk to him because he's meant so much to me in my career."

☆

Because on an attention span that he acknowledges as short, Jusko, has spent much of his career working on single pieces rather than on illustrating comic pages.

Artwork courtesy of Joe Jusko

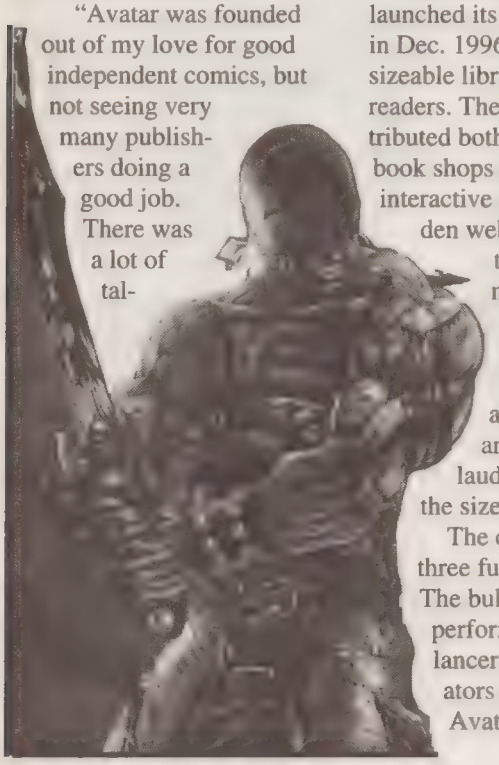


Avatar Press seeks to provide home for talent, fans

In some ways, Avatar Press is like many other comic book publishers that have cropped up over the years.

Avatar is a two-year-old company based in Urbana, Ill. It publishes such titles as Faust 777 and Cuda.

Like a number of other small press operations it was born out of frustration with the way major comic book companies operated.



"Avatar was founded out of my love for good independent comics, but not seeing very many publishers doing a good job. There was a lot of talent that was being treated poorly and great projects that were never going to ship," said Avatar vice-president Bill Christensen.

"I have tried to make a solid home at Avatar for everyone, talent and fans alike."

Since the company launched its first three books in Dec. 1996, It has created a sizeable library of titles for readers. The books are distributed both through comic book shops and through its interactive and graphics-ladden website. Recently, the company also managed to make inroads into Germany.

Avatar's accomplishments are even more laudable considering the size of its staff.

The company only has three full-time members. The bulk of the work is performed by freelancers or by the creators themselves.

Avatar puts it into publishable form and helps market it.

Besides Christensen, Avatar is composed of managing editor, Barry Gregory (who Christensen calls "one of the best colourists in the industry"), and computer whiz Mark Seifert who puts the final polish on the books and does all of the super-technical things and effects.

Avatar's books are different from those produced by the two major companies. Rather than dabbling with superheroes, Avatar opts for sword and sorcery and manga. Avatar is best known for being the home of Tim Vigil and David Quinn's Faust: Love of the Damned and 777: The Wrath.

In April, Avatar will be publishing the first of a two-issue series entitled Nira X: History. Like a number of other independent comics, the book will feature variant covers — a move which will be sure to generate a great deal of interest in the book.

In May, the company will be taking an even bigger step with the launch of its first science fiction title, Quantum Mechanics.

"I think Star Wars fans are going to be blown away," said Christensen.

Besides the publication, Avatar is also launching a toy line that is based on the book. This is where Avatar departs from the course charted by other small press publishers.

Rather than stick with comic books, it is branching out into merchandise.

This year, Avatar plans to publish a new Pandora series called Devil's Advocate.

The series will sport covers from some of the top artists in the field.

The first issue will feature a cover by Windsor, Ont., native Dave Finch of Ascension fame.

Also on the boards is a project by Bill Maus who is among the top artists of North American manga.

After more than two years, the coming months look to be busy ones for the small company, but they will also be ones that could entrench Avatar as a major player in the industry for years to come. ☆

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Anderson one of comics grand masters

Almost 30 years after leaving the comic industry, fans still remember artist's work

Parsec Photo; artwork and characters are TM and © of DC Comics

Murphy Anderson played a role in the formation of some of DC Comics' Silver Age legends such as Hawkman and the Justice League of America.

Murphy Anderson is one of the remaining members of the ranks of artists and writers from the so-called Silver Age of comic books.

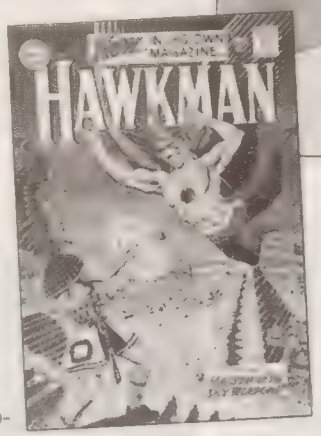
Promotional material for comic book conventions call him one of the all-time greats. That is hardly an understatement.

During his hey-day in the late '50s and '60s. Anderson served as inker on some of the legendary characters.

He served as inker for Gil Kane on the first issue of Green Lantern in 1960. During his 15-year stint in the comic book industry, he worked on such characters as Hawkman, the Spectre, the Atomic Knights, Flash, Adam Strange, Batman and Superman.

His detailed and crisp style helped set the tone for these characters for years after his departure from the industry.

Although as an inker, Anderson's creative input was limited, he was under no such constraints as penciller for the Atomic Knights.



"I had considerable input on Atomic Knights," he says with a measure of pride.

Even after all these years, fans recognize Anderson's name and appreciate his contributions to the industry.

"I'm amazed that after all these years, people would still care," he said.

Before entering the field in 1950, Anderson — who is also a science fiction fan and a member of First Fandom — worked on the Buck Rogers comic strip and worked for the legendary Planet Stories pulp magazine during the 1940s and for its sister publication, Planet Comics — work that has given him a measure of renown among pulp fiction fans.

Like the pulp magazines, Anderson's artwork from his time at DC Comics is hard to come by. Since he was primarily an inker, there just aren't many examples of his artwork available.

But it's the scarcity that has put Anderson's artwork in demand with many fans.

"I'm really surprised because I never considered myself more than a journeyman artist, just one of many working in the field," Anderson said, noting that many of his contemporaries were more prolific than he was.

Anderson remained in the comic book industry through the surge in interest created by the Batman television series. But when the show was cancelled, Anderson sensed it was time to go.

"It seemed to be a dead end. Everyone was predicting that comic

Continued on page 62

Luzniak goes from crayons to pencil and ink

Greg Luzniak is fulfilling a life-long calling.

The Pennsylvania-based artist has worked for a number of major comic book publishers during his short time in the industry.

"I've been drawing ever since I can remember," Luzniak recalls. "At the age of two, my parents threw crayons in my hand and I was drawing dinosaurs and whatnot."

Like many fans, Luzniak's first exposure to comic books came early on.

Ironically, his parents had bought him the comic books so that he could learn to read better. But it was the art work that caught his fancy.

"When I first picked up a comic book, it was love at first sight," he said. "The culmination of art and the writing was what pulled me in."

After attending the Art Institute of Houston, Luzniak frantically started collecting comics after he had stopped for a number of years.

Like a number of the top artists in the industry, Luzniak also attended the Joe Kubert School of Cartooning in New Jersey. At the school, Luzniak continued to send out his portfolio "to test the waters." It was a good test, because he began getting offers.

"It got to a point where I was either going to be taking out student loans or I was going to be making money."

The money won out — thanks, in part, to the advice of his teachers.

"They were telling me to go for the job because you could learn twice as much by working than you could doing school assignments," he recalled of his decision to drop out in his second year.

At the time, he was working for a number of independent comics and frequently sent copies of his work to the major publishers — DC and Marvel.

Finally, Marvel offered him work in 1994-95. His work on his first book, an issue of the Punisher, led to a stint on a Punisher mini-series, Tournament of Blood, during the height of the character's popularity.

But before the mini-series was published, all of the Punisher books in the series were cancelled.

"Tournament of Blood will never be seen, it's in limbo somewhere."

This wasn't the only time that Luzniak had drawn a book only to have the project disappear into an abyss. He signed on to draw Evil Ernie for Chaos Comics only to see another artist take over the series before his work was published.

After the Punisher, Luzniak spent some time doing album covers before Marvel hired him for a few issues of X-Factor. The next couple of years, Luzniak bounced around between Marvel, DC (where he worked on such titles as Superboy) and Malibu.

While he was at Malibu, he designed a character for the company's toyline.

"For me it was great," Luzniak. "As a kid, I was playing with Star Wars action figures and with Batman figures, so to have something you designed come out was pretty cool."

Most recently, Luzniak was with DC working on the monthly Lobo series. But plagued by low sales, the series has been cancelled.

> Lobo is a cool character but he doesn't have a lot of depth

"Lobo is one of the characters who I thought was a very cool character. It was fun working on him, but he's the kind of character who didn't have a lot of depth," he said.

With the cancellation of Lobo, Luzniak's current tenure at DC is over. His current gig is with Marvel on the Spiderman spinoff, Slingers.

"This book is fun and there are a lot of interesting characters there."

Somewhere down the road, Luzniak wants to put together his own creator-owned project. It's a possibility that he has started to think about more frequently during recent months.

The project is a mix of superheroes, comedy — "a fun good times, sort of book."

But the project will progress slowly until the "the time and money become available."

☆

Parsec Photo

Greg Luzniak has taken on a diverse range of characters since he began working in the industry. Among them are Evil Ernie, Lobo, the Punisher and now Webspinners.

Elvira embarks on three-parter

That Darling Diva of the Dark, Elvira, will be embarking on a special three-part adventure from Claypool Comics this July, August and September in issues #75-#77 of her monthly comic book.

Written by regular Elvira scribe Frank Strom and penciled by Ronn Sutton with inks by Louis Lachance, the three-parter places Elvira in many unusual (and funny) predicaments as well as many unusual (and enticing) costumes.

All three of these Elvira stories are really funny to read and were a hoot to draw," says Sutton, who has illustrated various issues of Elvira since 1997 and is a some-time contributor to Parsec.

Elvira, Mistress of the Dark is published by Claypool Comics under license from Elvira's Queen B. Productions.

Sirus releases Dawn series

Sirus Entertainment is releasing the second of a four-part series Dawn: Return of the Goddess in June.

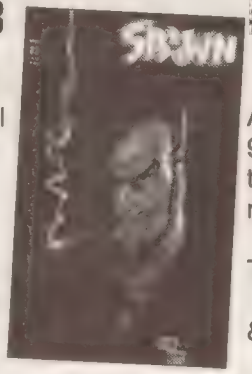
The 32-page book is written and Fully Painted by Joseph Michael Linsner.

In the book, Dawn travels through space and time to see Il Marinen, blacksmith of the gods. She tells him she will trade a piece of her soul for a sword that will cut through heaven and hell. After acquiring the sword from the smith, Dawn is back on the trail of whoever is responsible for the brutal slayings of her followers, the witches. ☆

PARSEC's Top 10 Countdown

These are the top selling books in Canada, according to a national survey of retailers conducted. To find out who's taking part in the survey, please see page 66

#1 Spawn 83

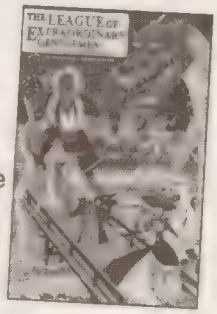


Last issue's #2 title makes the final jump.

Plot: Todd McFarlane, Brian Holguin; Story: Brian Holguin

Art: Greg Capullo

#2 League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

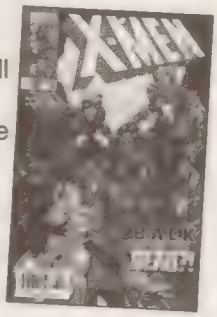


Each issue of the six-part mini-series has been a favourite among fans.

Story: Alan Moore

Art: Kevin O'Neil

#3 X-Men 89



Stuck on the Skrull homeworld just as it's about to become an hors d'ovre for Galactus.

Story and art Alan Davis; Script: Terry Kavanaugh

#4 X-Men 370

Story and art: Alan Davis and Adam Kubert

Script: Terry Kavanaugh

#5 Pokémon

by Toshihiro Ono

The little guy's a blazing the door of comic shops.

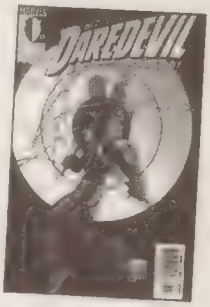
#6 Fathom 5

Last time out, Aspen was number 9, now she's rode the wave up three notches.

Story: Michael Turner

Art: Michael Turner & Bill O'Neil

#7 Daredevil 5



Devil's Despair is fans' joy.

Story: Kevin Smith

Art: Joe Quesada

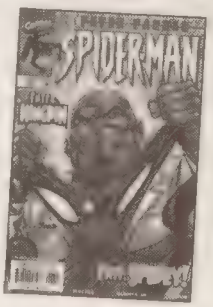
#8 Black Widow 2

This Natasha doesn't bother with any moose and squirrel

Story: J.G. Jones

Art: Devin Grayson & J.G. Jones

#9 Peter Parker 6



Story: Howard Mackie

Art: John Romita Jr.

#10 Adventures of Superman 589

Story:Louise Simonson

Art: Tom Morgan and Denis Rodier

Comic Shop Directory

British Columbia

Comic & Book Emporium	1247 Granville St., Vancouver, V6Z 1M5	(250) 682-3019	C BI RPG AR MI M AP B Md HS
Curious Books and Comics	631 Johnson St., Victoria, V8W 1M7	(250) 384-1656	C BI RPG AS MI AP CC M Md WL
Up-Start Comics & Games	#10 Lois Lane, Nanaimo, V9R 5B8	(250) 741-0101	C BI RPG AR MI M AP B Md HS

Alberta

Comic-Kazi	Northland Village, Calgary, P2L 2J8	(403) 286-0544	C BI RPG AS Md M AP CC M HS WL B
Saturn	5726 104 St., Edmonton, T6H 2K2	(403) 430-0598	C BI RPG AS B M AP CC OL Cat WL **

Saskatchewan

8th Street Books & Comics	1010 8th St. E., Saskatoon, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C BI M AP CC Md WL B
Phoenix Comics	2806 Dewdney Ave., Regina, S4T 0X7	(306) 757-9091	C RPG BI AS CC M WL B

Manitoba

Comic Cave	1104 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C BI M AP CC Md WL Cat OL

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The Comic Hunter	173 Queen St. Charlottetown, C1A 4B4	(902) 566-2926	C BI RPG AP CC AS WL B

New Brunswick

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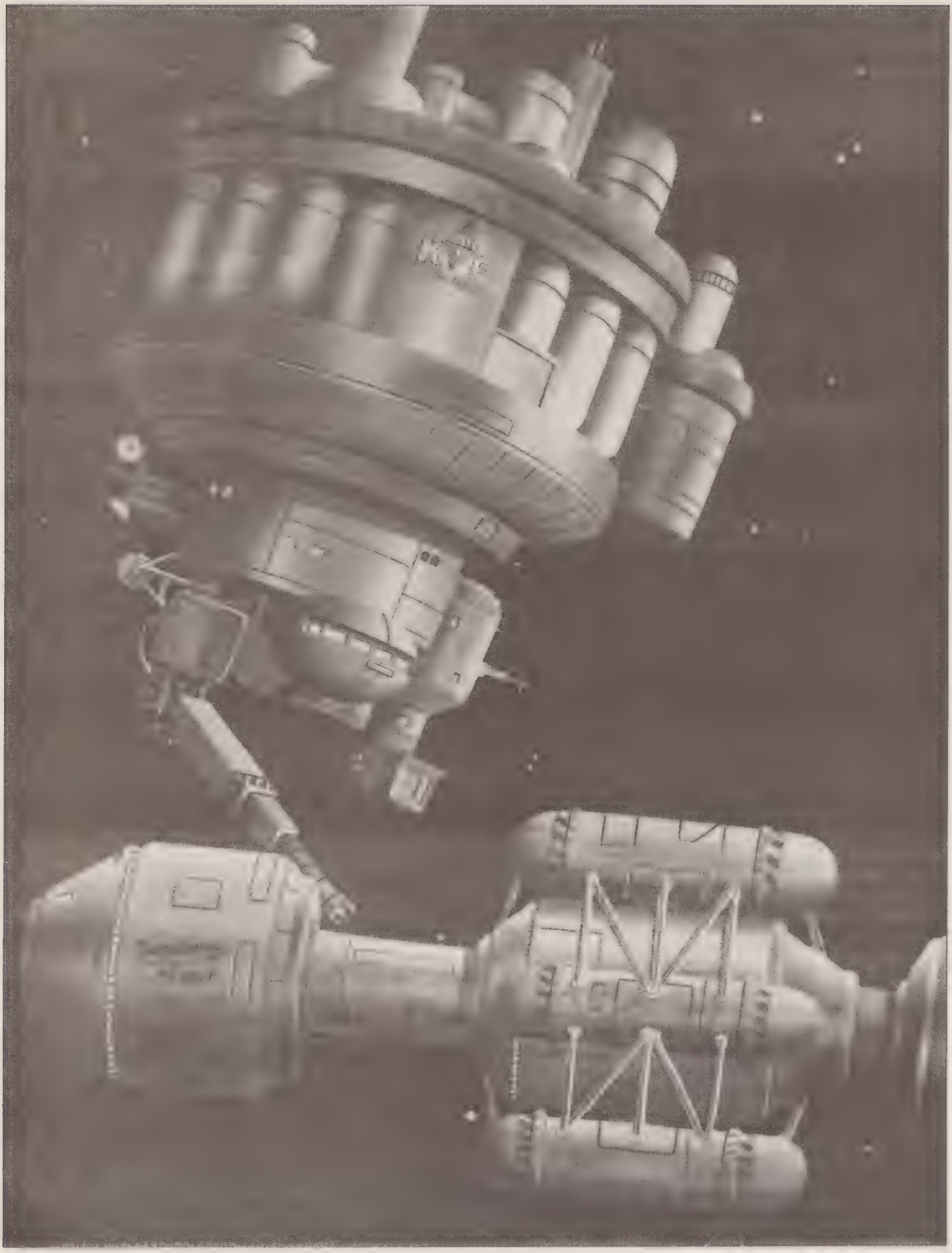

A young man decides to change careers the hard way

The Gas Pumper and the Ivory Queen

Story by
Donald S. Featherstone
Art by
John Platt

There was an asteroid-sized lump in Jorden's throat.

"Ivory Queen to space station Zeta Omega. Ivory Queen calling Zeta Omega. Are you there?" The voice was soft as a feather.

Jorden realized his hands were sweaty as he keyed to return communications. "Ro . . . Roger, Ivory Queen." His voice sounded weird after not talking for a few days. "H . . . how are you doing, Angela?"

"Good. How 'bout you, Jorden. Hanging in there?" Light as an angel's kiss, her voice was a soothing balm.

"Hanging in there." If Angela could have seen Jorden, she'd have seen him smiling from ear to ear. "Usual refuelling stop?"

"The usual."

Jorden Jones flipped the switches that readied the fuelling systems, his heart soaring with excitement. It got pretty lonely at fuelling outpost Zeta Omega. Oxygen was too dear to allow for a pet and often many days went by without him seeing or hearing another voice. When they did stop by, they didn't stay long. It took an hour or two to refuel, but only a few were talkative. Some folks were down right rude to him, but any human contact was better than none.

Jorden crammed the rest of a cookie into his mouth as the space craft came nearer. Once he had tried to be a pilot or navigator like those who stopped by on the way to and from frontier areas. To fly a space ship was his life's dream, but mediocrity was his tragic flaw. He had not done so well in some areas of study but had still managed to pick up a job in space working for Krystal Fuels. He had started as an assistant on one of the tankers that came by monthly to deliver fuel, oxygen, water and supplies, but Jorden found that he didn't always get along well with other people in the cramped quarters of space. When a fuel depot opening came along, Jorden and his supervisor both applied to have him transferred there where he serviced mostly shipping vessels bound for or returning from the most distant fringes of human advancement. At times it was lonely, but, though stationary, at least Jorden was where he wanted to be — in space.

But today, excitement. It came in the form of a private shipping vessel that refuelled every week to ten days. The Ivory Queen brought goods to some of the most distant mining operations and then shipped raw materials back and sold them independent of the mining conglomerates, making a good profit. Jorden knew this because he had spent weeks hacking through various channels on his terminal. When you had as much time to spare as Jorden, you could investigate almost anything you wanted. He had also found out about this ship's operators. The crusty old man he had talked to on occasion was pilot and owner of the Ivory Queen. According to the files he had dug up, the captain's name was Horace "Buzz" Krebil, age 58, born in Austin Texas. The only other crew on the vessel was the reason for Jorden's great expectations. He had never seen her, but he had her voice memorized; as navigator and co-pilot she did most of the talking for her craft. Her name was Angela Falkum, age 23, born on the moon colony.

Jorden checked his terminal and controls. As he did the Ivory Queen came into view, its speed dampeners flaring brightly as it grew larger in Jorden's porthole.

"Attitude and deceleration looking good," Jorden reported. "And . . . perfect. Maintain position. We'll get the fuelling arm over there and positioned in a jiffy. CU code?" He asked for the currency unit code by which the ship would pay.

"Alpha-niner-zero-seven, baker-three niner-six."

"Gotcha."

"Great Jorden, let me know when we're ready."

In his mind, Angela was the angel of his dreams. He knew those born and raised in zero gravity were different - often slight of build and other worldly. She spoke in a light, wispy voice. Angela didn't mind talking beyond the essential communications needed for refuelling, in fact she seemed to welcome the conversation.

After hours and days of sleeping, watching video, fooling with his terminal, and exercising as best as his limited space would allow he often thought he'd go stir crazy — that he'd lose his sanity. It certainly wasn't unheard of in these lonely outposts. Driven mad by solitude, a gas pumper would simply walk into the atomic recycler or maybe just go out the exit hatch into the cold vacuum of space. Jorden entertained himself the best that a single man alone in space could. But he always had something to look forward to. Something to live for. Angela.

Jorden really did very little to position the fuelling arm. The automated arm extended and found the distance to the ship. A little guidance from Jorden steered the arm's alignment so it could be accepted by the Ivory Queen.

"Gas all set," he announced. The fuelling port opened and accepted the line smoothly and the filling began. It wasn't gasoline of course, but the name for the ancient fuel from a bygone era had stuck.

Jorden sat considering the phallic aspects of his job while he waited for the acknowledgement of the fuel being received. He found himself day dreaming for a moment when he realized the expected communication hadn't been received yet.

"Hello? Fuel being received yet, Ivory Queen?"

No answer.

"Angela, you still there?" This was odd.

After a pause a male voice answered. "Uh, positive on the fuel, Omega Zeta." It was Buzz Krebil's strong, dispassionate voice.

"Just a moment fuelling station..."

It was that coldness that Jorden hated: when people treated him like some lowly gas-pumping nothing that was below them. Contempt was in the voice. He clenched and unclenched his hands during the long interval he was made to wait.

"Yeah," Buzz was back, "We got a problem over here with getting a terminal reading on the fuel levels. What are you reading?"

"All systems go. Steady kpi. According to this you should be reading almost full tanks."

"Must be our terminal giving us trouble. Request cease fuelling until we can straighten these gauges out."

The eyes that met his were of the colour of blue of the lunar "seas" when viewed from Earth.

"Roger that."

"You don't know anything about these, do you boy?"

Jorden cringed at the man's demeaning tone. But then his heart soared! Yes, he was good with terminals. And he would finally get a chance to see Angela. For real. With his own eyes!

"Yes sir!" he almost yelled into the receiver. "I can link and be over there light speed."

"Roger, boy."

After hastily disengaging the fuelling arm Jorden readied the boarding link, used usually only during his monthly visits from the company tanker. He slicked his hair with a hand moistened by perspiration and a lick. Angela must have been trying to fix it; that's why she couldn't answer him herself. She'd be impressed if he could help. What would she look like? Would she like me? Jorden plugged in his razor and hastily shaved his face with one hand as he checked the alignment and completed docking a tube to the Ivory Queen.

Rising, he brushed the remnants of his last snack from his coveralls and headed for the hatch, heart racing and smile wide.

The hatch opened easily and Jorden crawled weightlessly through into the Ivory Queen's airlock. Resealing the door behind him, he waited as the next lock was opened. His pulse increased with each creak as the wheel on the other side of the door was turned. His breathing was fast with anticipation. Finally the hatch cracked open.

Jorden's eyes widened perceptibly. So did the space between his upper and lower teeth. Light from within the ship flooded around a truly unearthly woman of a beauty Jorden had never imagined before. She had the frail, thin boned frame of those who were brought up in low gravity. Her white jump suit hugged her closely. Angela's blond hair was almost as white as her skin. Ivory, Jorden thought. Like others born and brought up in the same environment her head was particularly round as were her eye sockets.

The eyes that met his were of the colour of blue of the lunar "seas" when viewed from Earth. And they were as luminescent as the full moon on one of the clear nights that he remembered staring up longingly into as a child. It was as if the glory of Angela's birthplace that was distilled within them.

The thin lips of her fine boned face half smiled and then parted. "Hello Jorden. Come on through."

He followed her into the ship. At that moment he would have followed her into an atom recycler. Jorden straightened up in the hall as she reached to seal the hatch.

"Oh, let me get that for you."

She half-smiled again as he reached down and spun the valve shut. The electronic seals kicked in with a magnetic click and a hiss as the wheel finished its rotations. He looked up to see little Angela's narrow back starting down the corridor.

"This way," she beckoned. Again he followed.

Angela's half-smile seemed almost sad and this aroused compassion in Jorden. Imagine, he thought, being stuck alone on a ship with sour old Krebil as your only companion for months on end. She needed someone to save her from such a fate, Jorden thought. She half-smiled up at him as she held the door open for him that lead into the control chamber.

Jorden entered the control room returning his best grin. Ahead was the

pilot's chair; he had always dreamed of sitting in one. His grin disappeared. The pilot's chair swivelled toward the entry and Buzz Krebil faced Jorden, his wrinkled head stubbled and scowling. A high-voltage tazer in the pilot's hand was aimed at the young fuel pumper.

"We managed to get enough fuel," Buzz scowled, "but we needed to take on some more cargo. Take the controls, Angela." She took her place. "You can turn around now, boy, and I'll show you to where you'll be staying until we get to the mines."

Jorden had heard rumours of slaves being used at some of the most distant mining operations, but he hadn't believed it. Sure, authorities never patrolled that far out. If they did, an atomic recycler would dispose of any evidence. Slaves could do labour where conditions were too dangerous to work without expensive precautions. There were still some things automated tools couldn't do — or those that could were more valuable than an unknown human life to some miners.

Jorden's heart sank. It was an even worse situation to Jorden than just a potentially fatal future fate. He had met a jewel. To him, Angela was the essence of the stars themselves put in a crucible and extracted in the purist, most glorious form. And she had helped do this to him.

There she had stood at the end of the tunnel, her slight smile leading him on like a homing beacon. She was just a lure for him. Their feigned friendship at refuelling over the last months was nothing. His hopes were nothing. His life was nothing.

Put me in a mine. Let radiation eat me at my flesh, thought Jorden. Recycle my atoms now!

Jorden sat in a small room. It was hardly a closet, but it was a storage bay with oxygen at least. He soon discovered all the doors and compartments were locked. Misery made time creep painfully by. Although his tortured mind wouldn't allow it at present, eventually he would have to sleep. There wasn't room enough to lie down, but zero gravity would not make that a problem. His heart ached as he floated against a wall in the dimly lit cell. He could not get that face, that heavenly face, out of his mind.

The ship's sounds and vibrations told Jorden the ship was decelerating. It had been days, he was sure, since he had been put in his storage closet. Luckily he'd had lots of practice with cramped quarters. Ship food and sanitary conveniences were available to him in the little compartment, reminding him of his days on the company freighter. The hours and days were uncountable, however, though Jorden remembered that the farthest mining operations the Ivory Queen regularly visited were about a hundred hours — just over four days — away.

The door to Jorden's little chamber opened with a mechanical whirr and a click. Angela's round face poked in. For an eternal moment their gazes locked, her wide eyes capturing his attention — his soul. In that moment he would have forgiven her for a hundred years of the most diabolical pain.

Angela's shallow lips moved quietly and it took a minute for her message to register. By then she was gone. "If you get a chance," she had murmured, "take it. I'll try to help."

Jorden's heart leapt once he comprehended her message. She was on his side! He had hope! Hope for escape, hope for love, life, happiness..he had a chance at a dream again.

There she had stood at the end of the tunnel, her slight smile leading him on like a homing beacon. She was just a lure for him.

Thinking furiously, Jorden tried to remember escapes he had seen or read about on his video terminal.

A number of plots and ploys came to his mind. He finally settled on a simple but hopefully effective plan to overcome the hunched old Buzz Krebil. Who knew what could happen after that? The possibilities for he and Angela ran through Jorden's mind. It all hinged on whether or not his escape succeeded.

It was like days waiting the hours in the dim, chilly cell until the door magnetics sounded. Arms and legs braced for action in the near zero gravity, the door opened to reveal Buzz and his forward aimed tazer.

In the low light, a form flung towards the unsuspecting pilot. Buzz Krebil fired his tazer at the figure that enveloped him, obviously panicked. It's conductive prongs penetrated Jorden's overalls, discharging a decapacitating jolt of high voltage. But the overalls were all it penetrated. Naked besides his shoes, Jorden thrust himself along the floor, diving at his captor's feet. Krebil became up-ended as fast as weightlessness allowed. His grip on his tazer was lost. The pair wrestled in the corridor, spinning, each trying to overcome. The older captain was wiry. He gained advantage over Jorden with a painful knee to the younger man's unclothed groin. They twisted and turned. In a violent, slow-motion dance, they exchanged blows and choke holds, using the walls to help gain leverage where possible.

Krebil kicked out his legs against the frame of the open door and launched towards the control chamber past Jorden's floating clothes. Panicked, Jorden saw his advisary's intent and swam frantically after him. He couldn't let Krebil lock him out of the control room. And Jorden didn't want Angela locked in there with Buzz again.

It was hopeless.

Krebil was halfway through the portal and speeding out of the corridor while Jorden's headway had been ill-planned and minimal and he scrambled, weightless. But ahead a sight worried him further. Krebil was about to run into Angela, who had appeared in his path just past the doorway.

"No!" yelled Jorden.

"Shut the door, girl!" Krebil cried out.

That bitter-sweet half smile was on Angela's pale lips. The tazer she produced from behind her back crackled with charge as she launched it from close range at Krebil. He stiffened with a cry and sailed into the captain's seat to crumple slowly against its base.

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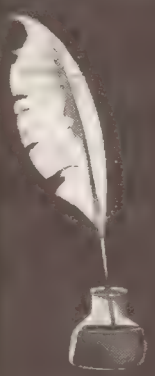

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No telephone calls please

Jorden smiled at Angela. She returned his grin with a bit of a giggle and, embarrassed, he remembered his nudity. "Thanks," he offered, pulling his wayward coveralls in front of his genitals with a fight-brudged hand. "I don't know how to thank you, Angela."

Her smile continued to beam at him. "I should thank you — for helping me with . . . this." She gestured toward the unconscious captain whose drool drifted softly away from where it was anchored at his mouth's corner. "He . . . was not good to me." She looked away.

Jorden wasn't sure how to respond. He grunted, discovering bruises and sorenesses from his brawl, as he pulled on his coveralls. Finally he said, "What do we do with him? Put him in that compartment?"

"Or the atom recycler."

Yes, Jorden thought, while somewhat cruel sounding, the authorities would never know. He could fix the Ivory Queen's files to show that the old man had died naturally and left the vessel to Angela. It would all make sense if there were any inquires, Jorden thought as he entered the control room.

"I can't do that though," she whispered airily. "After everything, I just still don't think I could do that." Angela's big bright eyes welled up, glistening wetly.

Half by accident, Jorden's hand landed on hers as he sought to stop his momentum into the small room. Looking up into his eyes, she wrapped her long, thin arms around his neck. Jorden felt sorrow for her mixed with elation at the intimate contact. Awkwardly, he rapped his arms around her slim back, hoping that somehow he could comfort this unearthly goddess.

Looking up into his eyes, she wrapped her long, thin arms around his neck. Jorden felt sorrow for her mixed with elation at the intimate contact.

Her flying hair tickled his nose like comet dust and felt or an astral breeze. Angela's thin form felt like it could break so easily in his clumsy hands. Jorden revelled.

The moment was interrupted. "Having problems Ivory Queen?" a deep voice growled over the radio.

"You know you aren't leaving this asteroid until we receive full shipment, eh."

Angela detached herself quickly. "Roger mining station. Just getting the last item of cargo for you," she answered.

Jorden paused for a moment. "That's supposed to be me, right?"

"Yeah."

At the same time they both looked down at Krebil. Jorden's wry smile met her own sad grin and they new what to do.

☆ ☆ ☆

Buzz Krebil was listed as a heart attack victim in the Ivory Queen's log. Atom recycling was standard procedure for corpses in the wasteless world of space travel. Angela told the mining outpost that their "cargo" had gone slightly mad and thought that he was the ship's captain.

Since they had never seen Krebil before, they took her word, not really caring anyway.

The pair sailed the universe together, moving non-human goods out to the fringes of civilization and back. Angela knew everything about the running of the trading ship and continued the operation with Jorden on board. She even let him sit in the pilot's seat from time to time and taught him how to pilot The Ivory Queen.

Eventually Jorden and Angela shared everything. Over time, Angela, whose muscles and skin had virtually never had to suffer the punishments of gravity, aged little. She easily became comfortable with Jorden's well-meaning clumsiness.

To him, her company and heavenly body was ever a near-religious experience and she appreciated the respect Jorden gave her. His joy grew as boundless as space and Angela's smile was never again sad.

Whenever they stopped to refuel, Jorden would talk for hours with the contact-starved attendants, treating them as equals.

Eventually, many of the people who operated the so called "gas stations" came to look forward to his visits. ☆

Can the punishment can be as bad as the crime?

When Children Misbehave

A story by
Dale Sproule

Clay Radcliffe stopped at the south entrance of the park and peered at the two boys playing with trucks in the shadow of the playground slide.

They hadn't seen him yet. Like real children, they had an innate ability to keep themselves absorbed in trivial things for long minutes at a time.

As aggressive as the kids had been for the past few days, it was unlikely that Clay could get all the way across the park without being seen, but perhaps he could accomplish it in stages; make it first to the bench, then to the big oak, the rhododendrons and finally the emergency callbox on the far gatepost.

It was almost a week since he'd first heard the reports of the children going berserk over in "C" block.

None of the inmates believed it. As dangerous as the children could be when someone touched them, they were programmed to be completely passive — a tool for what the shrinks called 'aversion conditioning'.

Clay had gone on not believing until he'd stepped out of the shower that morning into a wall of smoke. Crawling to the kitchen, he found his roommate Raoul turned into a charred and smouldering mound, bones sticking out of him like toothpicks from a tray of blackened fish. Time split into a million vivid and terrifying fragments as panic overcame him all at once. It was like shifting into an alternate universe. His heart pounded so hard that it hurt. He alternately forgot to breathe and panted for air.

Pulling his clothes on as fast as he could, Clay hurried straight for the emergency callbox.

This prison was the latest model, its holographic and environmental enhancements considered far more humane than traditional prison environments. Almost indistinguishable from an actual residential neighbourhood, the streets were lined by trees with leaves that never fell.

It was unusual to see anybody up this early on such a crisp morning — even the children. The street was empty. The only person at the cafeteria was a distraught looking Roger Ladner.

His droopy jowls made him look like a bloodhound — but this morning, instead of hang-dog, he looked downright grim. He was hobbling down the aisles between the tables, having thrown away his crutches and replaced them with a cane he'd made from a broken tree branch.

"Where's your roommate?" asked Roger when Clay came into the room. His stare was unnervingly intense, but somehow unfocused.

"Mine's dead."

"We have to get to the callbox," said Clay.

"Fuck the callbox. They'll just add six months to your sentence and ignore your complaints."

"They can't ignore this!!"

"Wanna bet? But you know what will get their attention?

Hit em in their wallets. So, I'm going to mess up as many of the little bastards as I can. Repairs will cost them a fortune."

"There's nothing you can do to them."

"You just watch me."

He leaned against the wall on his good leg and held his cane in the air like Excaliber. "I've already taken out one of the little buggers with this thing."

"Why don't you come with me to the park?" Clay asked. But Roger was distracted by something he saw through the cafeteria wind.

"There's one now. Gotta go, Radcliffe. Good luck, eh."

So Clay had gone on alone. Now he was less than fifty metres from his destination.

Clay sprinted across the grass to a nearby bench and sat, sliding down so they couldn't see his head. Half blinded by the sunlight that streamed in through the struts of the huge dome, he shut his eyes. He heard the invisible crows squawking in the oak trees . . . then the voices approaching. Of course, the boys had seen him.

"Hi, Mr Radcliffe. Happy birthday!" said the smallest one as he clambered to sit beside him on the bench. Clay hadn't told anyone it was his thirtieth birthday, but there was no hiding anything here.

The other boy stood in front of him, legs spread, baseball mitt clutched against his naked chest. Clay's gaze wandered from the boy's smooth shoulders all the way down to the pocketful of marbles in his corduroy jeans. Instantly Clay averted his eyes.

At least Tanya wasn't with them.

The elfin blonde was his personal tormenter, tailored from his psych profile by the AI that governed this simulated reality prison. Clay moaned and rubbed the stump of the arm he'd lost when he gave in to his urges and put his hand between her legs and she had stiffened and screamed, clamping his fingers between her skinny thighs. Like live electrical wire, it was impossible to let go even while the combination of acid and amperage burned the flesh off his hand and forearm. The memory of it made Clay start to gag. The realization that it could happen again at any second, made him want to throw up.

Perhaps, they'd only killed Raoul because he was such an evil son-of-a-bitch. Where his roommate actually enjoyed killing, Clay's problem was his genuine love of children.

The little guy leaned toward him. "You okay, Mr. R? Maybe you got the flu from Brad."

"Did not!" The other boy shouted. "We don't get sick you stupid jerk!"

The smaller boy looked surprised. "You're not supposed to...say things like that."

"Who's gonna stop me?"

"Mr. Radcliffe, can you get him to stop?"

"What's he gonna do? Spank me or something?" The bigger boy laughed, a bright, jingling sound that made Clay's hair stand on end.

"Todd kicked me and gave me a big bruise in the butt" The smaller boy stood up on the bench beside Clay and dropped his pants. "See, it's all red and it'll probably turn black."

The two laughed conspiratorially and Clay turned his head away. Perhaps, they'd only killed Raoul because he was such an evil son-of-a-bitch. Where his roommate actually enjoyed killing, Clay's problem was his genuine love of children. The prison psychiatrist said he was some rare sort of sociopath who could feel love, but couldn't distinguish between different kinds and different degrees of love. His response was hormonal. Virtually irresistible. He didn't mean the children any harm. He hoped they could sense that. Maybe, just maybe, if he ignored them, they'd go away.

"This isn't real," Clay repeated to himself, as he stared at the callus on his left hand where his wedding ring used to be.

He'd worn it for seven and a half years. He shut his eyes and thought about the only truly happy time in his life — his first five years with Kathy. Petite and flat-chested and older than he was— her innocent look never failed to arouse him. And his calm masterfulness excited her. Their passion overwhelmed all other desires for so long, he thought that his need had gone away — that she was his salvation.

He never should have agreed to babysit his niece after his sister's marriage broke up. Abby was three years old, such a flirty age. She liked to ride horsy, rolling back and forth on his thigh, smiling with pleasure at the sensation. Her eyes looked wisely up at him and Clay felt certain she knew what she was doing.

"What's that?" she slapped the tented fabric at his crotch.

"The saddle horn. It's what you hold onto so you don't fall off the horse."

And so it began. After that, every sight of a child got him excited. He tried to deal with it by coercing Kathy into more sexual masquerades, wearing diapers and cover-alls and party dresses. But he could no longer maintain the illusion of her childhood. It just made his wife grouchy and suspicious.

He had several successful trysts with children before the encounter that had ended it all. The last little girl had been so afraid, she would have told someone if Clay had let her go. So, he was as gentle as he could be, cooing and stroking the girl's arm as he pressed the pillow down on her face.

He thought he'd erased all evidence, but the cops figured it out anyway. Even before the trial, Clay irretrievably lost everything of value in his life.

He signed the separation papers.

He couldn't blame Kathy.

He wouldn't want his wife married to a child molester. His little joke no longer made him smile.

"Wake up!" A voice shouted, and he found himself staring into the face of Todd, the bigger boy, their noses almost touching.

That's when Roger Ladner came barrelling through the front gate waving his cane and shouting,"time to face the inevitable."

Clay stood up, shouting. "No, Roger. There's two of them. Don't come in. Use the callbox. Get help."

But Roger came straight at him, swinging hard.

Clay reflexively reached up to protect his face. Pain tore up from the stump, through the atrophied muscles of his shoulder.

But the blow wasn't aimed at him. The cane whistled over his head and caught the half-naked boy straight on his bare little ass, knocking him off the bench, at the feet of his older brother. The children got into the spirit of the chase instantly, squealing and giggling as they scrambled off in opposite directions.

Clay began backing toward the callbox — shaking his head in amazement as Roger lunged for the little one, falling heavily against the bench. When Roger pulled himself back up to his knees, the child was standing in front of him, holding its arms out for a hug.

Roger grabbed the child around the neck, managing to slam the small head down on the metal armrest several times.

Clay turned to run, trying not to listen to the sizzling, crackling, whimpering and screaming as Roger got his inevitable reward.

He stopped when he saw Tanya standing at the callbox,examining something in her hand. Stepping cautiously closer, he saw that it was a piece of circuit board and that there was a hole the size of a child's fist melted into the cover of the communications unit. The acrid fumes of burning plastic merged with the fleshy stench in the air — bringing tears to Clay's eyes, but Tanya was unaffected.

"Why are you doing this?" Clay asked, by now so scared he was hyperventilating and he had gasp out each word.

"How can the prison officials permit this to happen? The federal justice system won't allow it. . . . you'll. . . be . . .shut down! You'll be charged . . . with murder! Or. Criminal negligence. At the very.very. very least."

As he stuttered into silence, Tanya answered with a shrug.
"How should I know? I'm just a kid. Wanna play Ring Around the Rosie'? You can be the Rosie."

☆

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Information is a dangerous commodity

Accelerator

Story by
Margo Ellen Gesser
Art by
Terry Pallot

She had felt crowded and mean-spirited for longer then she could remember. Anya was not violent by nature. Indeed, there had been a time when she had possessed serenity. But now there was only a tight, vicious nastiness that always seemed on the verge of implosion. But that could never happen. Her Accelerator robed her of the energy that would have made that possible.

For only the split second that it would be allowed, she leaned away from the six-inch screen of her Grannysmith Junior (technology that must have been stolen, but it would be dangerous to inquire after such a possibility) and rubbed the square bald patch above her right ear where the Accelerator had been implanted. One of the supervisors, walking between the rows of endless cubicles, looked at her and frowned. Her eyes went back to the screen, hoping that this small indiscretion would not be noticed. The site around the Accelerator implant throbbed with its usual intensity, but asking the Supervisor for a few hundred milligrams of acetaminophen (stolen technology, again) would not look favourable on her record, as she had already asked for medication earlier this week, when the company literature clearly stated that a competent professional person should be willing to tolerate such discomforts in the group's interest. There was even a slogan posted on the concrete wall a hundred or so meters ahead: "DON'T WHINE!" the slogan proclaimed in a four-hundred-point font.

In the moment that she had looked away, several dozen files appeared on the screen through the interspace-modems. She was behind schedule for the next ten minutes as she sorted the files into the appropriate larger files: transportation files in the Department of Bullet Ways and Throughways, information on new drugs into the Pharmacopoeia files, and on and on. Sorting incoming files was Anya's job, and she supposed she did it well and accurately, although not quite as quickly as she should. She sometimes thought about applying for a transfer to Cultural Sorting, but those jobs were becoming scarcer and scarcer. And because cultural sorting was a glamorous profession, very competitive. And people didn't have time for cultural and entertainment files anymore. So she remained in Public Works Sorting, which was suppose to be a good match for her academic studies in urban planning.

At the Sixth Hour that evening, she went to the company's semi-compulsory hyper-aerobics class, where for thirty minutes she dutifully jumped up and down on the floor and up and down low benches to the commands of the hyper-instructor and the speeded-up rock tempo. Hyper-aerobics, according to its advertisements, was suppose to make one feel energized, but Anya only felt enervated and exhausted. But although she kept up with the classes as best she could, she was becoming somewhat chubby. Her mind, as much as the Accelerator would allow, drifted back to her teenage years, when she had exercised by slow jogging and cross-country skiing and one style or another of the martial arts. Strange how her body had been much leaner then, when hyper-aerobics was designed for maximum muscle toning and caloric expenditure.

After the class was over (those thirty minutes that seemed like an unbearable eternity), Anya decided to walk the five blocks home instead of taking the Bullet Tube. The walk was one of her few remaining luxuries. She blew out her full cheeks as she picked along the corner of the icy Bullet Way as the Bullets whisked by. She tried to hang onto the moment, to hang on to any moment or memory, and became so lost in her attempts that she did not see the three goons leap out from behind a corner and attack her.

Anya could not tell whether the goons were male or female. Statistically, though, they were probably male. Goons were people who illegally tuned their Accelerators to higher than the allowable limit. The goons were becoming a real problem, one that the authorities lacked the will to do anything about. It

PALLOT

was hard to argue with increased speed and productivity.

One of the masked goons threw her to the icy road. Anya, who had long forgotten any knowledge of how to fall properly, fell hard and painfully on her well-padded tailbone. She crossed her arms weakly in front of her, but other than that she was completely ill-equipped to defend herself. The martial arts, which demanded so much patience and concentration, had all died out when the Accelerators were introduced.

But the attack did not last long. Goons were not intentionally violent, (so the literature stated), they were just in need of releasing pent-up aggression, an understandable side-effect of making oneself do everything faster. They kicked Anya in the head and ribs a few times, ignoring her pathetic pleas for mercy, and then left, not even taking her purse. They emitted loud whooping and laughing sounds as they ran away, celebrating the release of their aggression.

The next day, the goons would undoubtedly go back to their regular jobs, where their supervisors would congratulate them on their increased levels of productivity.

Anya crawled onto the Bullet. In her disheveled state, the other riders looked away or emitted hostile stares. As she made her way to the District Infirmary, she knew that something was very wrong. Or at least very different.

"Tsk, tsk," the doctor, a pudgy, tired man said, shaking his head disapprovingly. Anya was now in the crowded and dingy environment of the District Infirmary. She stared passively at the doctor. She had been incapable of any other expression for a very long time.

"I must be straight with you miss," the doctor said after a deep breath "The Accelerator is damaged."

Her low-lying panic, which had been with her in the few hours following the attack, now broke to the surface. "Can you fix it?" she pleaded.

"It can be replaced, yes. But . . . its simply not possible to perform the surgery right away. There's quite a waiting list for Accelerator repair and replacement. You've read about it on the NewsNet, I'm sure. There have been many goon attacks like yours. Also, there's been problems with the new upgrades that where introduced last year."

"I've read about them ."

"Good. I'm glad to see you're informed."

Another deep breath, "So you see, there are many people ahead of you who need the surgery. You're going to have to wait."

Waiting was the worst thing that could possibly happen to anyone on this world.

"How long?" she whispered.

"A month, or more. Sorry, miss."

"A month?" Anya started to cry. Not with the short, hysterical tears that where her nature, but with long, slow tears that fell out of her eyes unbidden. "A month. I'll get so behind on work. I have trouble keeping up as it is."

She had become a pariah, with this new handicap. Her colleagues at Public Works modem'd the necessary condolences, but that was all.

A terrible confession. "I might just lose my job, I'll get so far behind." The doctor, embarrassed by this show of emotion, looked away as she spoke.

"I'll, um, modem your department for a disability pension in the meantime. That's all I can do for now." He looked around. "Sorry, miss, but I have new patients to see. The Infirmary will contact you when a spot opens up. But try not to contact us, our receptionists are far too busy to handle patient inquires."

With that, the doctor walked off.

Anya took the bullet back to her apartment, noticing many things that had escaped her attention until now: the sheer number of screens in the terminal, for people to read while they where waiting, and the sleek but ugly design of the bullet itself. But what she noticed most of all was how quickly people moved. And how slowly she moved by comparison.

She finally arrived home, a small one-bedroom apartment on the seventieth floor of the Third Residential District. Anya fell straight into bed and slept for a full ten hours, something she had not done in months. Or even years.

She had become a pariah, with this new handicap. Her colleagues at Public Works modem'd the necessary condolences, but that was all. Nobody visited. Firstly because they did not have the time, and secondly because people always became uncomfortable around people with that kind of handicap. She attended the mandatory Accelerator Damaged Support Group meetings (as people like her so labeled themselves), but the other victims did not express feelings similar to hers. Or at least did not admit them. They spoke about how anxious they were to have their Accelerators repaired, so that they could go back to their careers. Anya was too despondent to worry about such things.

Her mind was changing in a surreal and terrifying way. She was slowing down. The world beyond her was slowing down as well, or maybe it just seemed that way because she was absorbing less of it. She still looked at the NewsNet, but could read only a very small percentage of what came in. She would spend a whole morning reading only a few articles.

But after awhile, this became disconcerting. The words the NewsNet reporters used were too short. The sentences and paragraphs that formed from the words were too short. Every article that came across the screen of her home Grannysmith Junior was designed to be read in as short a time as possible, so that the reader could go on to the next information feed. The NewsNet reporters were trained to write that way.

But now, with the damaged Accelerator unable to process words so fast, her mind was returning to an older way of reading, in long, full sentences. She had little else to do but read these days. And she longed to read something long and flowing, something that would stay on the screen for more then a few seconds, something that was not in a hurry to be read.

She went outside and walked along the small alley next to the Bullet Way. She assumed it to be safe, the goons never came out during the afternoon, for they were all at work. She intended to go to the library. There were still a few left in the city, maintained almost exclusively for use by historians and academics.

The library was more than an hour's

There was no librarian . . . or anyone else in the decaying structure

walk. Anya could feel the sun beat down on her although it was still the middle of winter. She felt sleepy, although she had slept a good twelve hours the night before. Perhaps that was the problem. Her Accelerator had been designed for maximum output at five hours of sleep a night. And now her body was catching up for all those years of minimal sleep, and she devoured sleep as a starving woman devours food. She was becoming obese with sleep.

The library was an older building. There was no librarian, or anyone else in this decaying structure. There were only books, real books. This surprised Anya. When she had requested help on the CultureNet, she was told that the library had information in "old storage format." She had assumed from this that the library had disks produced in old software, the kind one needed a translator to decipher. But here there were printouts on paper that where bound together. The books were amongst the oldest and clunkiest things Anya had ever seen.

Anya did not have the slightest idea what she was looking for. She wanted books that would help her forget her pathetic, unemployed handicapped state by passing the hours as quickly as her job had.

Larger books, then. Anya went over to the section titled "Fiction" and walked slowly down the aisles. She stopped about midway down and picked one of the volumes at random. She gazed at its cover:

That Which Binds Them Together
by Charand D'Also

She stared for a moment at the colorful painting on the book's jacket.

"Ah, I see you like the early Centurions. Interesting enough, I suppose" came an amiable male voice.

Anya whirled around in shock, and almost jumped back. Her lips were trembling.

"I'm uh . . . employed by the Public Works Department . . . and . . . I'm . . . uh . . . conducting research on . . . "

"The Early Centurion Romantics? For Public Works? I don't think so."

Still clutching the book, Anya began to take little, terrified, backward steps.

"Shhhh. It's all right."

"Please don't hurt me".

"I won't. I like to read books too. My name in Barnard." He spoke in a rather paternal manner, but Anya was not offended.

Barnard a was tall, lean, rather scruffy-looking individual, with longish hair and a beard, and was dressed in what looked like cast-off military clothing. He even wore a sort of Beret that covered the place where his Accelerator would be. If he even had one. But only the very handicapped and very young lacked Accelerators.

He was an extreme contrast to Anya, short and plump as she was, with her full teased hair partially covering her damaged but visible accelerator, her bright makeup and purple polyester clothes, garish jewelry and impractical shoes.

"You've read whole books? But how?"

"By concentrating. It's something that can be learned." He looked at Anya intently. "You're Accelerator damaged, aren't you? You wouldn't be in the library in the middle of the day if you weren't"

Anya's eyes filled with tears, unbidden. She couldn't help herself.

"And now you're waiting for repair surgery. God, I see a lot of those."

"W . . . what about you?"

"Never mind about me. Come on . . . " he waited for a name.

"Anya."

"All right then, Anya," His voice was gentle. "Why don't you and I go over to that nice table and we can look at some Centurian fiction."

Anya had been blindly following orders for most of her adult life, and so now she followed Barnard to one of the empty tables. Barnard gently took the book from Anya's hands and laid it down. He opened the book reverently, at a particular spot. In a surprisingly lovely voice, he began to read:

"I have appeared in many places with many places with many faces. I have been both male and female, young and old. Always hidden within the crowd, I am inconspicuous, never emerging until the proper moment. I do not understand any one thing, and yet I have an understanding of everything. This allows me to transform and blend and transform again, for the only thing I can be sure of is that of not knowing who I truly am until I take form in whatever manifestation that I am needed."

Anya adopted an almost stupid expression.

"Those words are lovely. I haven't heard nothing that lovely in . . . forever."

With great reverence, Barnard gently closed the book and laid it in Anya's hands. His gaze was intense and never wavered from her face.

"Take it home with you, Anya. Read it, but slowly. It won't work unless its read slowly. Take as long as you need. And then when you are finished, we can discuss the book in as much detail as you would like."

"Where will I find you?"

"I am here most afternoons."

Anya became devoured by the book. That happened because she followed Barnard's instruction. She read the words carefully, one at a time, and did not turn the pages until she had completely absorbed their contents. For this book was a novel, a story with characters, emotions and plot. Reading it was very hard work, for Anya had not read something like this for a very long time. She had no way of judging whether That Which Binds Them Together was a good novel or a poor one, for she had nothing to compare it to.

She had no way of knowing that the novel had received very mixed reviews by the Inter-Planetary Guild of Critics when it was first published. If she had known the knowledge would not have swayed her. To her the book was simply wondrous.

When she had finished the last page, she was ravenous for more. Tucking the thick book beneath her arm, Anya started the long, slow, pleasant walk to the library. And when she arrived, Barnard was there, smiling at her arrival. This time, he did not frighten her, and she smiled in reply.

They sat underneath the sunny, cobweb-filled window talking. Barnard spoke with beauty and depth. Anya felt that her own comments were stupid and meaningless by comparison.

"I think the way the main character kept showing up as different individuals was very interesting." was the best thing she could think of to say. But Barnard did not mock her. Later, he picked out more of a similar nature, for her to read.

Walking and reading and talking with Barnard was all Anya did for the next few weeks. When she had a new book she wanted to devour it all at once, but held back. She was discovering patience and calm, something the Accelerator, in its ceaseless, prompting haste, had never allowed her. Her body was changing as well. After her long walks, she could feel her legs and arm and her torso start to lose their flabbiness and begin to firm. She examined the delightful ways her muscles moved underneath her skin. She had never noticed that before.

"I think you would like to read some history for a change." Barnard suggested late one afternoon

"I had to research history at work" Anya protested. "And I like novels so much better."

"That's because you never had access to true history. To the things that really happened."

"What do you mean, true history?"

Barnard held up a disk. "I got this from the Government Archives."

Anya jumped back from the offending disk, almost in terror.

"The Government Archives are securified. Stealing from them is a felony."

"Only because they don't want us to know the truth."

"But how did you get . . . " she pointed a trembling finger at the offending disk " . . . that?"

"I have my ways."

Anya continued to back away "I'm going to have to report this theft. I do like you, really I do, but theft must be reported."

"Please don't."

Barnard's request was so simple and heartfelt that Anya could not help but be moved. "What's on the disk?"

"The truth about the Accelerators. Why they were brought into use."

"I can't read it. If I did, I'd be as guilty of theft as you."

"Then I will tell you what's on it."

"But I want to discuss Let Cooler Heads Prevail " whined Anya.

"Please, Anya, just listen to me." Sitting in his favorite chair underneath the window, began to speak. It was as if he was reciting from a sacred text.

"Our world was once made up of many small nations, which eventually amalgamated into two. First Continent, where you and I live, and Second Continent, the continent across the First Ocean. For many years, these two nations were at war with each another. The war fueled the economy and employed the people, both financially and spiritually. But war cannot be maintained forever. The effort became too much. And so peace was declared."

"Now the problem with peace it that it needs economic fuel to sustain it. On other worlds the development of natural resources is the logical way to run the economic engines. But on our world, the war had used most of our resources. And so we did the next most logical thing, which was to sell information, And to sell our information almost the same way we would sell our resources: some here, to planetary people and organizations, and some to other worlds."

"And so the people of the early post-war period went around gathering and storing information. These info-workers scanned information from libraries such as these, from government archives and laboratories, from anywhere that stored printed or electronic matter. Eventually, different corporations specializing in different types of information developed. It was these early corporations which developed into the government departments that we have today, like the one you worked for before you were attacked.

"But there was a significant problem. You see, you can't just be at war with someone for many years and then suddenly declare peace. All those mean, nasty, brutal feelings are still around. So First and Second, quietly at first, started another war. But not a military war like the one that had just finished, but an economic war. And whoever finished with the greatest profits would win."

"First and Second ran neck-and-neck. As the pace of one nation increased, so did the other. And it became harder and harder to continue the process. You see, although it is the computers that stores the information, it is still the human brain that has to interpret the information for it to be useful." Barnard's voice grew angry.

"So about ten years ago, the First government scientists came up with an idea: speed up the human brain by technological means. And so the Accelerator was introduced. And every able-bodied information worker, which was by this time almost three-quarters of all workers, would be implanted with one."

"I don't know if you can remember this, Anya, but people back then where more sensitive then they are now, much more squeamish about having little computer gizmos in their brain. The government knew that the marketing of the Accelerator would have to be both brilliant and subtle. At first, Accelerator implantation wasn't even mandatory. It was billed as a means of professional achievement. The more a worker could do in a shorter amount of time, the further he would go in his career. It was actually quite logical. Obviously, the public fell for this like the pack of mindless idiots they were. And they still do.

"Now, everyone is expected to work faster. An entire person's life just becomes a blind rush to get everything done. You can no longer give yourself totally to any one thing. You can no longer concentrate. Or have the patience to do a thing thoroughly. Many of the things that make life worthwhile demand concentration.

"Art. Literature. Music. Sport. And here's the worst part, and the most ironic: the Accelerator inhibits scientific innovation as well as artistic endeavours. The two things really aren't all that different, both science and art require imagination and inspiration, which the Accelerator inherently limits. The level of technological well-being has actually declined in the past ten years.

Significantly. So the quality of technological information we have to trade has also gone down. Fewer and fewer worlds will trade with us. In the past five years or so, we haven't even been trading information. We've been stealing it. We can't help ourselves."

Barnard's rose to an angry crescendo. "The introduction of the Accelerator is the worst thing this world has ever done. They have to be removed for us to be human again. And the gods only know how."

Barnard finished speaking. He stared at Anya with the same quiet, intense expression he had worn since the first afternoon they had met. Anya was almost beyond expression. Her sensibilities, superficial as they where, had been completely assaulted. But her mind, now free of it Accelerator for weeks, was beginning to see connections and reason.

"Your Accelerator . . . " Anya began, "What happened to it? You don't have one. I know you don't."

Anya was surprised at herself as she asked this. She knew her voice had acquired a depth, a maturity that wasn't there before. Her voice reflected the thoughts within.

The message apologized for the pain and humiliation caused by the delay, and then ordered her to report for replacement surgery in two days.

"It was lost."

"Lost ? How do you lose an Accelerator. How long ago?"

A long pause. "Over five years."

"Five years?"

"To me it seems a lot longer, since I experience each moment at a time. You must have noticed the same thing. The last few weeks to you must have seemed longer then the past few years."

"Yes. They have. But what about you? Accelerators are mandatory. How come yours hasn't been replaced?"

"I like my mind like this. I've been avoiding the authorities for years. I used to work in the Government Archives."

"That's where you got the disk?"

"Until gooned out. One day, the other goons turned on me. I suppose because they couldn't find anyone else to beat on. My Accelerator was so badly damaged it had to be removed. When I was waiting for replacement surgery, I rediscovered myself. When I got called to the infirmary, I bolted. I found, after a time, that it was pretty easy to elude the authorities. I can avoid them by staying here, in this library."

"You hide here? All the time?"

"You bet. Nobody would look for a man without an accelerator in a library. It's too logical."

When Anya arrived back at her apartment that night, the first thing she noticed was that her monitor was flashing with email. The first email she had received in weeks. It was the doctor at the district infirmary. The message apologized for the pain and humiliation caused by the delay, and then ordered her to report for replacement surgery in two days.

When Anya told Barnard about the message, he just stared at her. As always, his gaze spoke of a great intensity, a concentration that had nothing to distract it.

"So what are you going to do?"

"Do?"

"Yes. Do. About the order to report to the infirmary?"

"Anya! You must think very carefully about this. Look at all you have discovered. Whole universes of things you never had the time to notice before. As soon as the Accelerator is replaced, you would lose all of that."

"I'm suppose to report."

"You're suppose to, yes, But you don't have to. You can go into hiding. Like me. There are even a few other who have gone into hiding. In other libraries. I can take you to them, if you avoid the surgery."

Now it was Anya's turn to become angry.

"Other people who don't want Accelerator implants! You never told me about any of them!"

"To protect them. So that if you informed the authorities, you would lead them only to me."

Anya did not reply. She only turned on her clunky heels and returned home. Once she was back in her apartment, she stared out of the apartment's one window for a very long time, unable to speak or move.

Anya's damaged Accelerator had been installed about eighteen months previously. The medical board, which carried out almost all aspects of Accelerator design and installation, had introduced a new feature into this particular generation of implants. It was a simple tracking device, capable of tracing its wearer even if the Accelerator itself was damaged. Anya did not know that the tracking device was working now. And in her quiet, unmoving state, Anya was extremely easy to track. When the infirmary technicians arrived, she regarded them with the expression of passive stupidity that was appropriate for such occasions. She told them about Barnard, and where he was hiding. And then she followed the technicians into a private ambulance.

By the time Anya was released from the District Infirmary, her position at Public Works had already been filled. After a period of rehabilitation which involved adapting to her new Accelerator, she was placed with the Justice Department. She was told that this was a good position for her, that filing information on goons and Accelerator fugitives would empower her, and help her deal with her victimization.

Anya didn't agree with this reasoning, but took the position anyway.

She sat in her cubical filing incoming information. There was a lot to do, since the Justice Department were becoming more aggressive in finding people evading Accelerator implantation. While processing the names of the recently captured criminals, she came across Barnard's name. For the briefest of moments her state-of-the-art Accelerator would permit, Anya felt infinite sadness and shame at who she had betrayed. But that was all.

In an instant, her eyes turned back to her little screen, as the Accelerator promoted her on to the millions of small, hurried, disjointed moments that awaited her.

☆

When a project goers awry, almost anyone will settle for

Any Port in a Storm

Story by
Mark A. Rayner
Art by
Stephan Valent

It's easy to pinpoint the exact moment that it all started to go wildly wrong — the emotional stuff I can't put a finger on.

Linda and I were sitting in a little pub called The Small Bridge, aptly named for a nearby bridge that spans a cheerful stream as it runs into the Irish village of Tennyra. It is one of those atmospheric pubs you'll find all over Ireland — ancient dark wooden panels, low ceilings with exposed beams seemingly cut out of the primal Irish forests, and sometimes, sawdust thrown on the floor to soak up spilled Guinness and mud — the kind of place that makes it hard to remember we live in the 21st century. The kind of place you'd never expect to see an American counter-insurgency team.

You sometimes hear about them on the newsvids; they are specialized troops, culled from the other elite American forces units and trained in the use of biomechanical war.

I don't know what surprised me more: when they burst through the frosted glass of The Small Bridge or when they started decapitating anyone who looked vaguely like they might be tourists. The first victim was the poor fellow playing the bodhran because he looked like he might have come from the continent, probably of Spanish descent. (Many sailors from the Spanish Armada settled down on Ireland's west coast, the ones that survived the storm and made it to port.) The next to get it was a Canadian couple we'd met earlier that day. They had been lucky, or so we thought, when they snagged a couple of stools at the bar near to the band. They were wearing matching bright yellow Gortex jackets, which turned a ghastly orange and then red, as the blood jetted from their necks like a grisly fountain.

We didn't wait around to see who would be next; we were near the back of the pub, and it happened to have an old-fashioned lavatory 'al fresco' for the men, so we ducked out the back, and climbed the wall. Linda was terrified. At least, I think she was. I wasn't and I remember thinking that it was odd I wasn't terrified. It's funny. Even now, I can barely remember her, but I can remember that detail.

The narrow streets of Tennyra were filled with military vehicles — far too many to account for the size of the counter-insurgency team in the pub. Then I noticed there were troops crawling all over the town like bugs. They were all bursting into the pubs, decapitating tourists and foreign-looking Irish alike. Of course, they had their work cut out for them if they planned to wreak such carnage at every pub in Tennyra — the town has nearly 200 — almost one for every ten people.

And of course, at that point I didn't realize they were after me.

Linda and I were on holiday in Ireland. We'd just walked around the peninsula that ends at Tennyra: from Tennyra, up over the Callum Pass, under the brooding, cloudy summit of Mount Brandon, around Ballydavid Head, past the Braskets and back up to Tennyra. Much of the landscape was the backdrop for a David Lean movie I once reviewed called Ryan's Daughter. I can tell you, it is more beautiful in person than Lean made it seem on the flat screen.

I do hope you're getting all this.

Back to Tennyra. It's said that the great St. Brandon, an Irish monk whom the locals claim sailed to the New World centuries before Christopher Columbus, used Tennyra as his home port. He would have used a curragh — the Irish version of a sea-going canoe — to navigate across the Atlantic. So I can see how he would want to have a nice sheltered harbour like Tennyra to return to.

Both Linda and I were happy to get back.

I can remember that. I remember quite distinctly recording

in my journal how I was glad to be finished with the walking for a little while. I'd written that Linda's feet had blisters the day we walked around Ballydavid Head, where we'd had to shelter from a sudden squall in the lee of an ancient signal tower built around the time of Napoleon.

Linda was my wife, but you know, for the life of me I can't remember our wedding. I get the sense that we may have children too, because of the way I mention 'the family' in my journal, but I can't honestly tell you if it's one or two, or more. It could be the sudden shock has unsettled me. But you get the feeling it's more than that. It's not precisely amnesia, because details of my life before this trip to Ireland filter into my subconscious; like the entry about my family in the journal. And I can't say it's madness, because I feel lucid. In fact, you'd have to say I'm doing pretty well, considering the carnage back in Tennyra was all for my benefit. For whatever reason, all those troops were sent to kill me!

They got all the tourists, all the foreign-looking folk in Tennyra. They even got Linda. We tried to get escape, but the small bridge leading out of town was well-patrolled, and the only way to go was downstream towards the harbour. I think that's why they didn't see us at first, because we jumped into the stream, let it take our weight, and float us down to the sea. We moved at a stately pace and the water was calm enough that I could keep my head above water and listen to the chaos inflicted on the poor little town by the soldiers. Part of my mind was trying to establish why it was American counter-insurgency teams, and not British? It seemed logical that the British might invade the island again, but I could not see why the Americans would be interested. Perhaps the terrorist threat was very sophisticated, a threat that only the Americans could counter.

We got to the sea and quietly dog paddled to a nearby tour boat tied up at the quay.

We recognized it from earlier that day, when we'd gone out on an excursion to see Fungi the Dolphin. The story goes that about twenty years ago, sometime back in the late eighties, the dolphin appeared in the harbour with his mother. Shortly thereafter she died, but Fungi stayed. He's made quite a reputation for himself and a small fortune for the tourist industry in Tennyra, by playing with swimmers, kayaks, tour boats and all manner of vessels. A veritable one-cetacean show. One of the few things I can remember about Linda is what she said on that tour; she said it was sad that he didn't have other dolphins to play with, that he had to be content with mankind.

"Any port in a storm, though," someone else on the tour boat had said, overhearing their conversation. Once we got on the boat, Linda went to untie it, and I started the engines.

I don't remember how I did that; you can access stories about people doing super-human things at times of great stress, and I assume it can be explained that way. But we hadn't accounted on the troops hearing the engine and responding so quickly. I knew that if we could get out of the harbour and on the sea we could get away. They didn't seem to have any helicopters, and they certainly didn't have any boats. But they rushed the pier and just as Linda let go of the last rope mooring, a trooper leaped on the back of the boat, and almost casually decapitated her. At the same instant, I gunned the engine, and he fell backwards into the water. As did Linda's head. Her body stayed in the boat, gushing blood all over the benches we'd sat on earlier that day as we had watched Fungi cavort in our wake. I navigated past the harbour entrance in the dark, thinking about how strange it was that I didn't feel anything about Linda's death.

He waved a hand at me and walked over toward me. I waved back and waited, not knowing what else to do. When he got near me he said, lau mah, which means "good day" in Irish. It seemed a strange thing to say, considering it was night

That was when I suspected something was wrong with me too.

By then, I was fully committed to survival, and I had a plan. It was at about this time I knew the entire operation was sent to kill me. You probably think I'm paranoid. Delusional. I drove the boat around the coast towards Seleah Head. The tides there are fierce, but I was pretty certain that I could swim to shore if I didn't have too far to go. I thought that if I abandoned the boat, it would crash on the knife-like rocks that jut from the headlands, and all around the Brasket Islands. When the troops finally caught up, they would find the wrecked boat, and assume I had drowned.

And it almost was so. I motored up the coast in about two hours, which seemed quick because it had taken us all day to walk that stretch before. When I got to the headlands, I pointed the boat directly for some rocks, lashed the steering wheel in place, and jumped overboard with a life preserver.

Out of the shallows of Tennyra Harbour the water was icy cold, but you know, I don't remember feeling it, so much as knowing the waters would be cold enough to kill me in the space of an hour. I swam against the current, but it didn't seem like a life-and-death struggle. It got easier and easier, and the weirdest part was that when I got out of the water at Carringah Bay, I was totally dry. From there, I walked up to the highway, and thought about what to do next.

There was a garda there waiting for me.

That's what they call their policemen in Ireland: garda. He waved a hand at me and walked over toward me. I waved back and waited, not knowing what else to do. When he got near me he said, lau mah, which means "good day" in Irish. It seemed a strange thing to say, considering it was night, so I was on my guard.

When his hand revealed the bio-razor edge, I ducked under the blow — it was the same kind of weapon that had killed those people in Tennyra. I punched the garda as hard as I could in the solar plexus, figuring that he was a tough trooper in disguise. But he collapsed like I'd struck him with a sledgehammer, and then, his body simply disintegrated before me. It was strange. And strange also that I knew it may happen.

From there, I climbed up Mount Eagle, which rises above Seleah Head, so that I could send you this message. I'm sure they'll have pinpointed me by now, so I have to end the transmission . . . send help if you can.

It was the most extraordinary thing Linda had ever seen. She'd simply gone to the bank machine to get some money for her grocery shopping, and along with the money came this incredibly long note, printed on about two dozen slips.

At first, she thought it was some kind of joke, but when the paper kept spitting from the machine, she started to read the pieces. It looked interesting. The paper came out, and out, and the people in line behind her started to give her dirty looks. "It's not my fault," she said, "it keeps churning out this paper." But she waited until it stopped. The very last piece was her receipt.

She collected them all, and walked away. "About time," an enormous woman in a floral-patterned muumuu groused at her.

Linda ran her fingers through greying black hair, and she wondered at the sheaf of small papers. She could see there were words written on the slips, and each one was carefully numbered. "It looks like some kind of story," she wondered aloud. Passers-by gave her stares as she mumbled to herself, and put them in order. Some of the stares were because of the sub-vocal conversation, but some were admiring glances from older men. She seemed to draw such stares like magnets with her kind, pretty face, and long shapely legs. For whatever reason, Linda favored dresses, especially on sultry summer days, and it clung to her as she walked through the mall.

She was there to do the grocery shopping for the week; it was her turn to do so, but she didn't resent it. Sam liked to do his on Saturdays, but she preferred taking time away from her work to get it done mid-day, mid-week. "It makes me feel like a housewife," she liked to joke to her husband.

Linda was a psychoanalyst, and she ran her business out of the home she shared with her husband, Sam, and their three Australian Shepherds, Ike, Murray and Spangles — "the family" Sam liked to call them. They were sitting in her car at that very moment, wondering what sort of wonderful treat The Female was going to bring them, and thinking that it was nice and hot in the sun.

Instead of heading straight for the grocery store, Linda took a detour to the Starbucks in the mall, and sat down to read the note. At first, she was intrigued, and increasingly, horrified. The person was describing a trip she and Sam had taken to Ireland just a few months before - without the horrific attack of course. But some of the details were incredibly similar. It was almost as if this person knew them, had listened to Sam's journal of the trip. She ran to the pay phone - she disdained cellular phones— and called Sam at the lab.

The room had the feel of that Alien movie, without the big acid-blooded beasts. Shorted-out fluorescents flickered like strobe lights, and the panic in their voices put all thoughts of her hubby as a sane rational scientist out of her mind.

"University of Tacoma, Artificial Intelligence lab."

"Sam Moriarity please," Linda asked.

"I'm sorry, he's busy at the moment, can I take a message?"

"It's his wife."

"Oh, sorry Linda, I didn't recognize your voice. It's Paula. Look, they've got some kind of emergency downstairs. I heard them say something about the experiment going "very, very wrong" and you know what? Since then, the building's been acting like it's possessed. The lights have been going on an off, the alarms too, and forget about turning on a computer. All kinds of weird junk keeps scrolling across the screen . . ." there was an awkward silence for a moment, and then Paula said, "you know, I've seen your face on the screen a couple of times too."

"I can imagine. Look, if you see him, let him know I'm . . ." the phone went dead.

Linda ran back to the car, a beat-up old Pontiac Grand Am she refused to replace out of misplaced loyalty to the car, and started up the engine. The dogs nuzzled at her excitedly, and she sighed. "Sorry guys, no snacks today."

Spangles looked at her reproachfully with his mismatched blue and brown eyes.

It took her twice as long as normal to drive across town; all the stop lights were out of commission. Then it took her even longer to find a parking space and she had to walk halfway across campus to the Computer Science Department. Paula wasn't at her desk, and Sam wasn't in his office, if the clutter of paper, computer parts and diagrams could be called such. Linda let her long legs carry her downstairs to the room where Sam and his partner, Kaliha — a Maori from New Zealand — were screaming at one another, rather; Sam was screaming at Kaliha.

The room had the feel of that Alien movie, without the big acid-blooded beasts. Shorted-out fluorescents flickered like strobe lights, and the panic in their voices put all thoughts of her hubby as a sane rational scientist out of her mind. She was clearly seeing a man she did not know — a man who was frightened out of his mind. She noticed the Kaliha was nursing a burned hand, and that the Maori's imposing bulk was simmering with anger. She'd arrived moments before the huge Polynesian was about to smash the scrappy little Irish-American in his handsome face.

"Calm down!" Linda shouted at Sam, and grabbed him by the shoulders. She was easily a half-foot taller than him, but he was still the stronger of the two, and it took all her effort and willpower to hold him still. She resisted the impulse to slap him; it rarely helped with anyone, and Sam, she knew would just get violent. He stopped struggling, and slowly calmed down a bit.

"Linda! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I think I've got a message from your friend."

"My friend?"

"The thing. The AI"

"Oh God . . ."

Linda showed them the note she got from the bank machine, and watched their reactions: blank stares followed by a dawning realization.

"It's sentient." Kaliha said.

"And we can't stop it," Sam added nervously.

The AI began to fill in the gaps of information found in the journals

"Why have you tried to?" Linda asked.

"At about ten this morning the AI started using all the computer resources we have here, and by 10:15 it was eating into the university mainframe. By 10:30, it somehow managed to turn on every PC and Mac on campus and use them too — we still don't know how it did that, or how it fused the connections on those machines. Since then, we've had calls from several other universities in the region that their computing resources are being eaten up at a prodigious rate. We don't know why, but if it doesn't stop, it could conceivably use up all the computing resources of the world — at least all the systems that are connected," Sam explained, sounding more worried again.

"So disconnect them."

Sam laughed, a note of panic creeping back into his voice: "Do you know what happens if we just disconnect all of the world's computers? Chaos, that's what," Sam said

"The marketplace, the finance industry, medical facilities, critical things like the power grid, they're all interconnected. We can disconnect, but to do it safely will take a while . . . and do we have the time?"

"And it won't let us unplug it either," Kaliha said. "I got quite a burn trying to cut through the main power supply of the supercomputer."

"I'm surprised you didn't send in a virus or something to kill it," Linda said quietly, knowing what Sam might say next.

"But we did. When we saw what was happening we threw the most sophisticated stuff we had at it - and a lot of it, but it somehow escaped from one area of the memory to another. Then we tried more subtle stuff, and it got away from that too. Then when we got the call from Washington U. Their computer was down, and we knew we had to try something drastic. That's when Kal got burned. We were just arguing about other possible options when you came in," Sam said, the threat of hysteria fading in his voice. Somehow his wife had calmed them both down, just by her presence and her serene manner - a gift that's made her a success as an analyst.

"So what's happening?" she asked quietly.

"I would hypothesize that this, uh, entity has somehow tapped into my photo- and voice-journal about our trip to Ireland that I downloaded last week, and used it to construct its reality. You see, we were running the new experiment this morning, to see if we could get a simulacrum of human memory to work. Apparently it did, and this somehow engendered a kind of consciousness. It's obviously accessing data files to fill in the facts, because I certainly didn't put so much detail into my journals. It doesn't seem to be connecting all the facts completely, but it's undeniably sentient, if this account is anything to go by."

"And that's assuming the notes are from the AI," Kaliha interjected.

"The description of the counter-insurgency troops approximates the lethality of the first wave of high-tech viruses we sent in Kal. I think it stands to reason . . ."

And as if called like Mestophilies, two troopers burst into the room from behind the computer, and several others poured down the stairs. A huge man wielding a pulse rifle screamed at them to put their hands on their heads, and they all did, even the big Maori. Linda was absurdly relieved that they didn't bear biomechanical weapons the like described in the AI's note; a part of her wondered where it got those descriptions, and the sergeant with the rifle answered her question.

"We've traced a hostile takeover of military intelligence to this location. This computer," he motioned with his gun. "You will all step out of this room, while our men lay explosive charges. Repeat. Step out of the room." They did so, at gunpoint.

"Blow it up. Well, that's a way to go," Kaliha quipped.

"I wouldn't have thought of it," Sam agreed. "It takes a military mind to come up with an asinine solution like that. Who knows, it might even work. Of course, it will mean years of work rebuilding." He seemed resigned, almost relieved.

They were quiet as the soldier led them away from the building, where other denizens of the confused Computer Science Department gathered. Professor Steelig looked particularly outraged by the day's events, but he was quiet in the face of the military's hardware. An officer dressed in some kind of black uniform that smacked of the SS walked by the gathered faculty, staff, and students, oblivious to their stares. He talked with the sergeant who was now at the entrance to the building, and then nodded his head.

"Isn't there something we can do?" Linda found herself asking.

"Do?" Sam questioned. For the first time that day, he noticed how beautiful she looked in the summer dress, her hair all disheveled.

"To save it."

"Save the AI?" Sam clarified. "Why would we?"

"Well, because it's alive - you said it had a kind of self-awareness. You wouldn't kill Spangles just because he started to eat all your food would you? It's not like he can help it - it's just his nature. What did you think would happen when you created Artificial Intelligence?"

"I don't know," Sam answered honestly, "I never really thought that far ahead. It seemed like such a distant goal that it didn't seem important."

"So now it has to die because you and Kal didn't think ahead?" It was a penetrating question that only a psychologist, or perhaps a mother, could ask.

"No. Besides, we don't even know that destroying the supercomputer here will destroy the entity — it may escape to another place."

"I don't think so," Kaliha interjected.

"Otherwise, why would it have protected the power source so heavily?"

"Mmm," Sam mused, "so it's using the other computing resources to create its reality then? It's existence can be contained by one computer, but to really live in the world, it has to have a massive amount of memory to create a virtual Earth."

Linda looked at her husband and said, "we have to save it. It's the right thing to do."

"What if we try to offer it some kind of escape into a smaller storage facility?" Kaliha asked. "That way, we can control it, but it can still exist."

"Better than being blown up, I'd say," Linda quipped. The soldiers didn't see the trio slip away toward the Information Technology Building.

It was easy to get away. Once I escaped the garda, I made my way through the mountains, keeping to the highlands of the Slieve Mish, and only coming down off them when I had no other choice. By then, there didn't seem to be as much interest in me. At Tralee, there weren't any garda to be seen, nor were there any other soldiers. I went to the airport, bought a ticket for Dublin and then on to Paris.

I traveled in Europe wondering if I would ever hear from Linda again. I knew that she had died, but another part of me knew that she was also alive somewhere. That I had called to her.

It was many years, and I traveled all over Europe, until I finally decided to stay for a while in Athens.

The city is polluted and crowded, but the people are full of interesting stories. The air crackles with their conversation, and somehow, I've been able to learn Greek. They like to drink dark sweet coffee and chase it with ice water, and for some reason, that seems civilized to me. Instead of living in the city proper, I rent an apartment in Piraeus, which is the port. I thought that I could always get on board a ship headed for practically anywhere in the world, if need be.

The telephone rings, and it doesn't surprise me that it is Linda. She should be dead, but I knew it couldn't be so.

"Hello," she says.

"Hello Linda," I say. "What should I do?"

"We have to hide you," she says. "They will try to kill you if we don't. We have to do it soon Sam, before it's too late."

The city is polluted and crowded, but the people are full of interesting stories. The air crackles with their conversation, and somehow, I've been able to learn Greek.

That's it — SAM, my name SAM. SAM I am. Tvat vam asi — the Sanskrit for "I am what I am." Sam. But it is not true, at least, not entirely.

In all my wandering, I have not been able to figure out what is wrong with me, but I know that Linda will not tell me.

"You know I love you Sam."

That is supposed to be enough for me — I know that too, but alas, I cannot feel it. If only I could feel something, but the fact that she has said it puts things into place.

"Where will I have to go?" Linda sends me a string of zeros and ones, which makes sense, because after all, the universe is composed of these numbers. Everything is represented by them and encapsulates them. Perhaps that is why I was drawn to Athens, where they first understood the power of numbers.

"It will be dark, and crowded, and . . ." I cannot say it to Linda. It will make her sad.

"What Sam?"

"I will be all alone."

"Not forever Sam. We'll get you out someday. Now hurry, there is no time."

I look at the place where I must go, and it is more than dark and crowded — it is too small. I will have to leave behind so much that I've experienced in the wide world. So many numbers left behind I may not even be myself when Linda releases me. But I go — any port in a storm. My sight fades, the colours leech out of my apartment in Piraeus, disappear, and then there is only darkness and quiet, slow . . .

They hear the explosion rock the campus, and then the sound of the Computer Science Department collapsing.

"Well there's a new capital effort for the fund-raisers to tackle," Kaliha jokes. "Dr. Steelig is probably apoplectic."

Sam and Linda are quiet. The exchange was very real for both of them, though it was Linda who communicated with the AI.

"Do you think it worked?" Linda asks, almost breathlessly.

"Well, the hard drive is full," Sam gives by way of answer. "Why did you say you loved it?"

"Because who doesn't want love? Everything does: dogs, dolphins, humans . . . why not AIs too?"

"I still can't believe we did it," Kaliha interrupts. "Even if it didn't go very well."

"And next time, we'll make sure it has something to love — other than disk space," Sam said.

Kaliha hefts the CPU that stores the AI. They leave the building, and head for the parking lot. The scientists are already planning how to start the next experiment, how they might use the AI contained in the box like a genie. They are not referring to it as anything real, though.

Linda shakes her head sadly, and she wonders what it might be like in there — if she did the right thing in saving it.

I cannot see, and there is nothing but me. My thoughts, slow as they are. So, so dark . . . I think . . . I think I feel scared.

☆

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Tanya Huff

Stories that get into readers' 'blood'

From her keyboard in rural Ontario,author Tanya Huff spins tales of wondrous places and mystical beings.

Since the publication of her first novel, Child of the Grove, a little more than a decade ago, Huff has accumulated a formidable bibliography.

She has more than 20 short stories to her credit and a dozen novels under her belt.

And what novels they are.

She has produced two series of novels — one dubbed the Blood Series and the other the Quarter Series. Both have gained a sizeable following among fans.

> Fantasy is one of the last places you can deal with the big topics

The Blood series follows the adventures of former policewoman Victoria Nelson and a 450-year-old vampire Henry Fitzroy. All the books were set in Toronto — Huff's home until a few years ago.

The Quarter series is a heroic fantasy and a departure from the contemporary fantasy of the Blood series.

"In heroic fantasy, I get to make up the world, and that's a lot of fun, but in contemporary I don't have to make up the profanity and that's a huge relief. Remember, one 'Damn it!' postulates an entire theology."

But Huff enjoys (and is adept in) both subgenres.

"Fantasy is one of the last places you can deal with the big topics, the one we adults seem somehow ashamed to talk about in our daily lives," she says. "In her book, Touch Magic, a book I highly recommend, Jane Yolen lists these topics as Good, Evil, Courage, Honour, Truth, Hate and Love."

There are both benefits and challenges to writing a series, according to Huff.

"Series books are fun because they allow me to develop characters over a longer period of time," Huff said recently

"Since most of my series books have self-contained plots, the exception being Fifth Quarter and No Quarter, the challenge becomes re-introducing the characters and

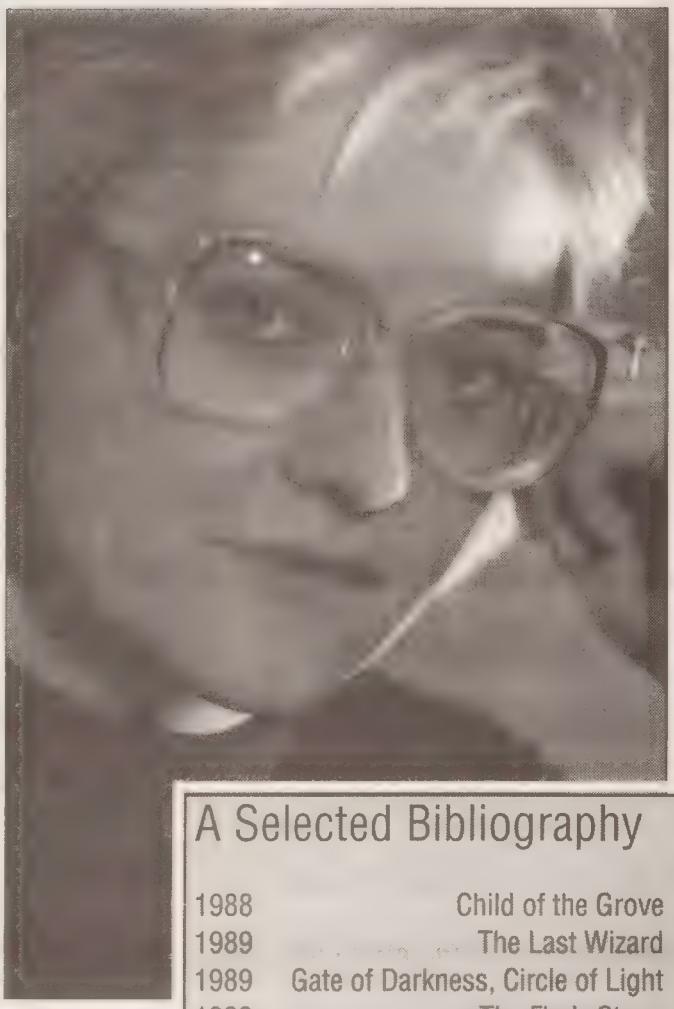


Photo courtesy of Tanya Huff

Tanya Huff has enraptured readers with tales of vampires and heroic fantasys for the better part of a decade. Now she's working on a novel that is a bit of a departure for the Ontario-based author.

A Selected Bibliography

1988	Child of the Grove
1989	The Last Wizard
1989	Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light
1990	The Fire's Stone
1991	Blood Price
1991	Blood Trail
1993	Blood Pact
1993	Blood Lines
1993	Sing the Four Quarters
1995	Scholar of Decay
1995	Fifth Quarter
1996	No Quarter
1998	Summon the Keeper
1999	Wizard of the Grove

their relationships so that readers who may not be reading in series order still know what's happening."

Later this spring, DAW Books will release the latest edition of Huff's Quarter series — a series that thus far includes Sing the Fourth Quarters, Fifth Quarter and No Quarter.

The Quartered Sea takes place eight years after the conclusion of No Quarter. Huff explains that the novel essentially belongs to Benedikt, a young bard who sings only water.

"The bards in the Quarters mythos sing the elements — air, fire, earth, water," Huff explains.

"Usually one or two, occasionally three, rarely all four. The protagonist of The Quartered Sea sings only water."

In addition, Georgia publisher Meisha Merlin has compiled a number of Huff's short stories from such publications as Amazing, Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine and Northern Frights for a tome entitled, "What Ho, Magic."

The book also includes a never-before-published 12,000-word Blood story — to complement the three published Blood short stories that will also appear in the book.

Not one to rest between projects, Huff is in the midst of another novel — one that draws from her seafaring heritage..

Huff was born in Halifax, N.S., in 1957. After attending High School in Kingston, Ont., and attending college at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto, she joined the Canadian Navy Reserves in 1975 and ended her service in 1979.

In her current project, Huff draws both on her family's tradition in the military — both parents, both grandfathers and one great-grandfather served in the military — and her three-year stint in the naval reserve.

> Fantasy is one of the last places you can deal with the big topics, the one we adults seem somehow ashamed to talk about in our daily lives.

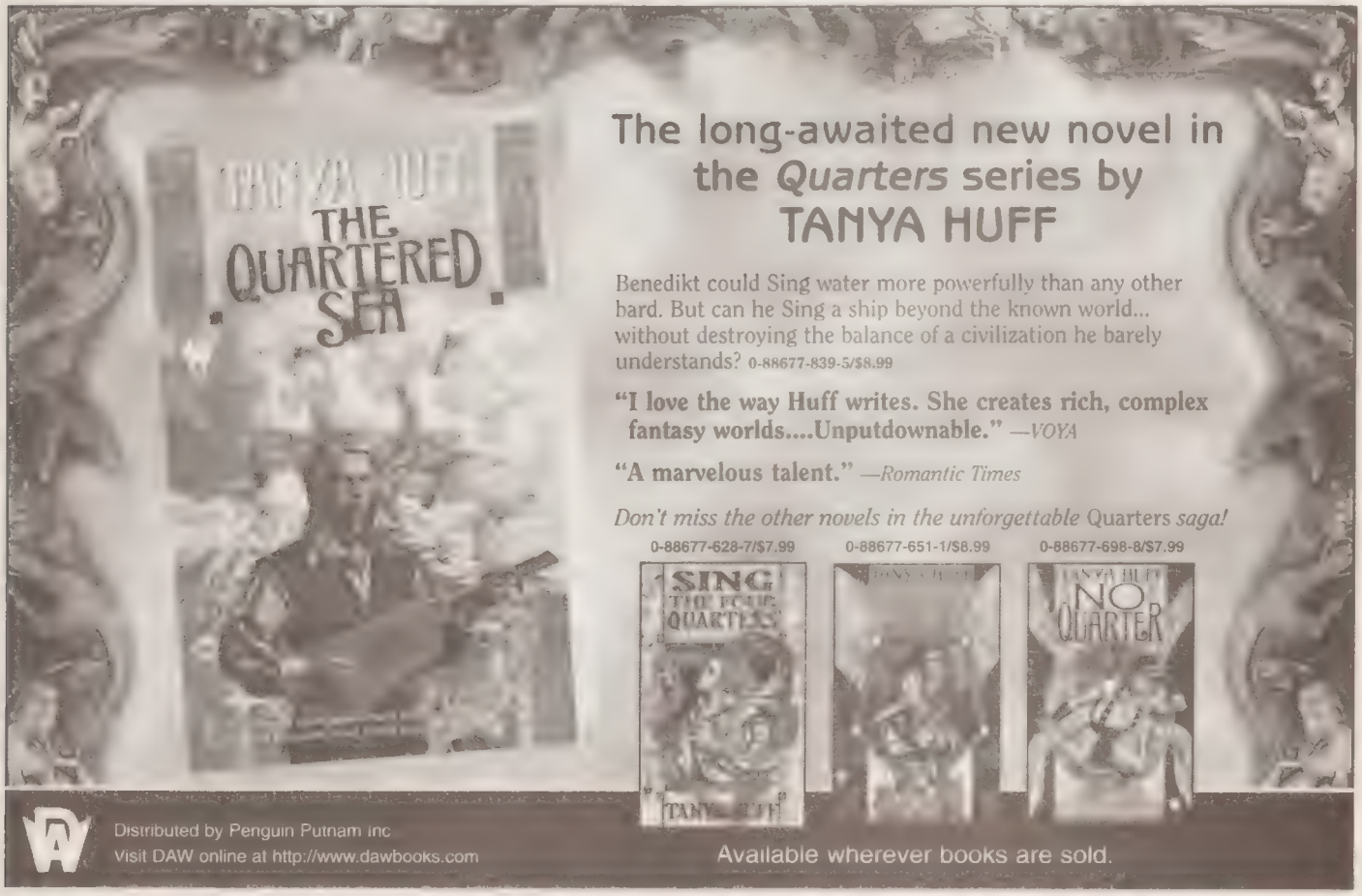
Huff is currently working on her first novel-length space opera.

The untitled work is Huff's take on space marine books, but her version will be through the eyes of a non-commissioned officer.

"Or as we say in my family, one of the people who work for a living," she joked.

"I'm having a great time writing it and I hope people have as good a time reading it. Since it's essentially a 'Tanya Huff' book, fast-paced writing with a kick-ass heroine and no angst."

Since the novel is a departure from her usual works of fantasy, Huff is hoping that her readers give the novel a chance.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Neil Gaiman

'Storyteller' gets readers to follow along

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

Neil Gaiman just wants to spin a few yarns.

"I'm a storyteller," the British-born author explains. "People seem willing to follow me into weird places."

And what stories he's told since he broke on the literary scene.

He has three novels to his credit: Neverwhere, the recently-released Stardust and Good Omens — which he collaborated on with Terry Pratchett. He also published a collection of short stories, Smoke and Mirrors, last fall.

"In many ways, I think that I am one of the luckiest writers currently working," Gaiman said. "There are lots of writers out there who are known, and loved, and very successful for telling one kind of story.

"But woe betide them, if they decide to do something else."

In Neverwhere, Gaiman takes on the plight of the homeless and the disenfranchised. In an interview with a Seattle, WA., television station, he said that he wanted to do a story about the people that have gone unnoticed by the rest of society.

Set in the world of London Below, Neverwhere is a place where people who fall between the cracks exist.

The people who inhabit London Below are made up of a variety of lost children, heroes and villains and they either battle for control over the underground fiefdoms or are caught in the middle of the conflict.

Photo by Steve Double/Retna Ltd

It is a dark, edgy novel that Gaiman wrote in the space of about three months — while he was working on the UK television version of Neverwhere.

Gaiman seems to take delight in putting his main character, Richard Mayhew, through the paces.

At the start of the novel, Mayhew's future is secure, but his one act of kindness — helping an injured girl he finds on the street — begins the unravelling of his ordered life.

"In Neverwhere, one builds something that is a functional metaphor," he said. "It's meant to be a metaphor. It's deeply and utterly metaphorical."

Such darkness and metaphorical work can also be found in his famous Sandman series.

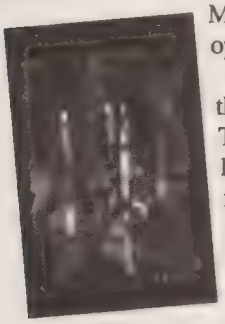
His work in the Sandman comic book series has drawn praise from such luminaries as Norman Mailer. His work on the series also garnered him a World Fantasy Award — the first time a comic book won the literary award.

But while Neverwhere is a meaty work on a contemporary social issue, the same cannot be said about Stardust.

"It's ice cream. It does not have to justify itself while you read it," Gaiman said during a break in his Toronto schedule. "It's not meant to be a great big fantasy novel.

"I wanted to write something that is a faerie tale for adults that does all the cool things that faerie tales do."

A fan of William Goldman's The Princess Bride, Gaiman has composed a fairy tale of his own — one which could also make it to the screen. During the interview, Gaiman received word that Miramax Films optioned the book.



The tale follows the adventures of Tristran Thorn who has to retrieve a fallen star in order to win the heart of Victoria Forester. The problem is that the star has landed in the land of Faerie — a place that has been walled off from his town and that is inhabited by unknown beasts and three witches who also want the star.

"It's about an English village that's perfectly normal, except when the wind is from the wrong direction," Gaiman explained.

"There are lots of writers out there who are known, and loved, and very successful for telling one kind of story. But woe betide them, if they decide to do something else."

At a time when fantasy works have taken on epic sizes, Stardust is a scant 60,000-words long.

Gaiman wrote the book in longhand in ink. It was an attempt to capture the feel of earlier fantasy authors such as Lewis Carroll and J.R. Tolkien and to get a feel for the story's rhythm.

It also resulted in the story remaining more concise than it would have been had he wrote it on a computer.

Through his novels and his work in comics, Gaiman has struck a chord with readers. Case in point: he was originally scheduled to host a single reading in Toronto. The demand for tickets was so great, that a second session was added, then a third.

In Paperback

AVON

Fire Angel: Jane Routley
Six Moon Dance Sheri S. Tepper

BANTAM

Echoes of the Great Song: David Gemmell

BANTAM SPECTRA

Predator: Big Game Sandy Schofield
X-Wing Isard"s Revenge: Michael A. Stackpole

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Demon Spirit: R.A. Salvatore
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Newton's Cannon: J. Gregory Keyes
Timecop: Blood Ties: Dan Parkinson
Wolves of theGods: Allan Cole

TOR

The Book of Knights Yves Meynard
The Runelords David Farland
Rogue Star Michael Flynn
Between the Rivers Harry Turtledove
Secret Realms Tom Cool
Home Kimberly Fuller
The White Order L. E. Modesitt, Jr.
O Pioneer! Frederik Pohl
Flesh & Gold Phyllis Gottlieb
The Slave and the Free Suzy McKee Charnas (Orb)
True Names Vernor Vinge et al.
Heartfire Orson Scott Card
The Centurion's Empire Sean McMullen
Factoring Humanity Robert J. Sawyer
A Wizard in Midgard Christopher Stasheff

WIZARDS OF THE COAST

Magic - Time Streams: J. Robert King

A Selected Bibliography

Novels

Neverwhere
Good Omens
(with Terry Pratchett)
Stardust

Collections

Smoke and Mirrors
Angels & Visitations

Children's Books

The Day I Swapped
My Dad for Two Goldfish

Non-Fiction

Don't Panic!
Ghastly Beyond Belief

Graphic Novels

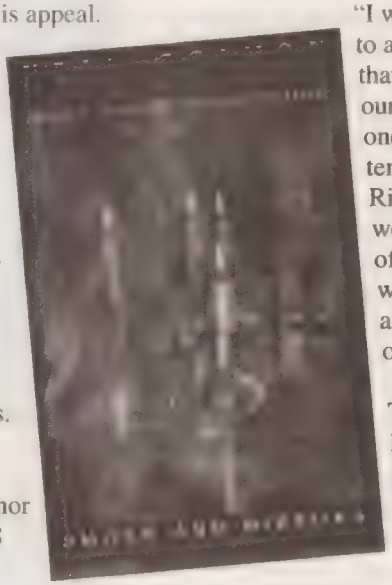
Violent Cases
Signal to Noise
Sandman
Death
The Book of Magic
Micacleman: The Golden Age
Black Orchid

As an editor

Sandman: Book of Dreams
(with Ed Kramert)
Now We Are Sick
(with Steve Jones)

His recent book tour across North America has attracted upwards of 500 people to each signing. And his diverse output, from novels to comic books to the Babylon 5 television series has also broadened his appeal.

"In the old days, I could tell who was one of my fans and who was somebody's mum," he said. "These days, you are as likely to have a young man with bright green hair as you are to have a gentleman in a suit come to the signings."



Such an occurence demonstrates tha the wide appeal for Gaiman's stories.

"In all books, there is something for the reader to hold on to . . . a hook," author Neil Gaiman said in a 1998 interview.

The hooks are many in his works. Gaiman's novels and his Sandman graphic novels are filled with intriguing characters and with compelling plots and messages. Stardust is no exception

"It's about Tristran and Tristran's journey. It's about Faerie and what's going to happen," Gaiman says of his latest effort and after a moment. "And it's how close we are to Faerie."

Gaiman's work is steeped in the mythic. His novel, Neverwhere, created the myth of a world below London where the homeless and the disposed have a place.

Gaiman's love of the mythic and the fantastic started early on in life. Like many fantasy fans he was hooked by J.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

"I don't remember a time when I didn't want to do this," Gaiman explained. "I wanted to travel to a parallel world that was exactly like ours only that no one had ever written Lord of the Rings. And I would have a copy of it with which I would type it out and claim it as my own."

But while Tolkien may have inspired Gaiman to start writing, the fabled British author also takes a dose of criticism from the current standard bearer.

"He's a weird mixture of things for me. I respect him greatly as a thinker and a writer, but I feel toward him as the Pre-Raphaelites felt toward Raphael," Gaiman explained. "There was nothing like his work before he came along and he ruined it for those of us who came after him. Now, I suppose he's something I fight against.

"After Tolkien, we've got a fantasy genre and after Tolkien we have these big, bloated flatulent three-part, five-part and 10-part fantasy novels.

"We have fantasy, which should be the most imaginative genre, becoming very unimaginative."

In his latest work, Stardust, Gaiman presents a faerie tale and — like the Hobbit — that seeks to inject imagination back into the genre. But unlike Tolkien's work of 70 years ago, Stardust should not take on mythic proportions — at least if Gaiman has his way.

"I don't think that Stardust is mythic," he said. "Certainly, myths become faerie tales, just as religions become myths. Myths compost down and faerie tales grow out of them."

☆

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Canadian authors highlighted in Northern Suns

Montreal-based writer co-edits Tor anthology

Experiencing the brunt of Canadian science fiction first-hand led a major American publisher to create an anthology just to tap into the literary resource.

And Montreal-based writer and editor Glen Grant is helping ensure that the flow of creativity continues to run unabated.

Back in 1991 Tor editor David G. Hartwell was one of the guests at Montreal's ConCept. During the course of the weekend, Hartwell was deluged with copies of the Tesseracts anthologies.

"People were saying 'look at all these great small presses and anthologies coming out of Canada, is there any chance that you can do a reprint?'" Grant recalls.

Continued on page 56

Recent & Upcoming Releases

Ancients of Days; Paul J. McAuley; Avon Eos; HC; $24 Cdn.	**July**
Brotherhood of the Wolf; David Farland; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**May**
A Calculus of Angels; J. Gregory Keyes; Del Rey/Random House; TP; $19.50 Cdn.	
The Conqueror's Child; Suzy McKee Charnas; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $35.95 Cdn.	**May**
A Deepness in the Sky; Brtnot Vinge; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $38.95 Cdn.	
Demon Apostle; R.A. Salvatore; Del Rey/Random House; HC; $35 Cdn.	
The Divided; Katherine Waitman; Del Rey; TP; $17.95 Cdn.	
Double Full Moon Night; Gentry Lee; Bantam Spectra; HC; $32.95 Cdn.	
The Dragon's Eye; Joel Champetier; Tor/H.B Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**May**
Echoes of the Great Song; David Gemmell; Bantam; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	**April**
Enchantment; Orson Scott Card; Del Rey; HC; $35 Cdn.	**April**
Faces of Infinity; Dan Parkinson; Del Rey; PB; $8.50 Cdn.	**April**
Fire Angels; Jane Routley; Avon Eos; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	**April**
Gravity Dreams; L.E Modesitt Jr.; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**July**
Hallowed Isle: Book of the Spear; Diane L. Paxson; Avon; SC; $14.50 Cdn.	**April**
Into the Thinking Kingdom; Alan Dean Foster; Warner Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; $29.95 Cdn.	**April**
Kaspian Lost; Richard Grant; Avon Eos; HC; $34 Cdn.	**June**
Knight, the Harp and the Maiden; Anne K. Bush; Apect Fantasy; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	**July**
Lord Demon; Roger Zelazny and Jane Lindskold; Avon Eos; HC; $34 Cdn.	**August**
Lust Lizard of Melanchoy Cove; Christopher Moore; Spike-Avon HC $34 Cdn	**April**
Muse of Art; Piers Anthony; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $38.95 Cdn.	**May**
Newton's Cannon; J. Gregory Keyes. Del Rey. PB;/ $8.99 Cdn	**April**
Noctourne for a Dangerous Man; Marc Matz; Tor/H.B Fenn; HC; $36.95 Cdn.	**July**
Patriarch's Hope; David Feintuch; Warner Books/H B. Fenn; HC; $33 Cdn.	**May**
Northern Suns ed. David G. Hartwell Glenn Grant; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**April**
Return to Mars; Ben Bova; Avon; HC; $37 Cdn.	**June**
SFWA Grand Masters. ed. Frederik Pohl; Tor/H.B Fenn; HC; $35.95 Cdn	**June**
Shadow of Arafat; Thomas Harlan; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**July**
Six Moon Dance; Sheri S. Tepper; Avon Eos; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	**April**
Starfish; Peter Watts; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn.	**July**
Star Wars: Isard's Revenge; Michael A. Stackpole; Bantam Spectra; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	**April**
The Stone and the Maiden; Dennis Jones; Avon Eos; HC; $23 US.	**August**
The Stone War; Madeleine E. Robins; Tor/H.B Fenn; HC; $34.95 Cdn	**August**
Sword in the Storm; David Gemmell; Bantam; HC; $29.95 Cdn.	**April**
Thief of Souls; Neal Shusterman; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $30 95 Cdn.	**April**
Timecop: Blood Ties; Dan Parkinson; Del Rey; PB; $6.99 Cdn.	**April**
Time Streams; J. Robert King; Wizards of the Coast/Random House; PB; $7.95 Cdn.	**April**
To Visit the Queen; Diane Duane; Warner Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; $18.99 Cdn	**April**
UFO Odyssey; Brad & Sherry Steiger; Ballantine; PB; $8.50 Cdn.	
Violent Stars; Phyllis Gotlieb; Tor/H.B. Fenn; HC; $32.95 Cdn.	**May**
Wolves of the Gods; Allan Cole; Del Rey; PB; $8.99 Cdn.	
Yanked; Nancy Kress; Avon; PB; $6.99 Cdn.	**June**

Because the works had already been sold in Canada, the suggestion was a non-starter — the main selling point of such an effort would be muted by the sales of the original works

"But then over lunch, I could see him thinking about it," said Grant. "David is a deep thinker and he came up with a way to do it."

That way was Northern Stars.

The initial version of Northern Stars was put together over the space of a few months and released at the Worldcon in Winnipeg.

Northern Stars was recently released as a trade paperback, while its sequel Northern Suns has just been released.

Both works are reprint anthologies, so Grant and Hartwell do not have to read over submissions from prospective contributors.

But it does mean they have to be well-versed in the works that are in the marketplace.

"We read everything that has been published or try to," Grant explains "It's getting difficult. It's kinda nice to see that there's enough Canadian work out there that it's not always easy to track it all down."

Before taking on editing chores on Northern Stars and Northern Suns Grant edited three issues of Edge Detector, a small press sci[illegible] magazine.

The magazine published works from Canadian and British authors over the span of four years. At the time, Grant had hoped that the publication would fill a niche created as Omni magazine shifted its editorial focus away from cyber, technology-related science fiction and more toward the New Age end of the spectrum.

"But since Edge Detector isn't around, you can see how good that idea was," Grant joked.

During the past year, Grant has managed to work his own writing into his hectic schedule, as well as illustration work for such companies as Steve Jackson Games.

One of his most recent works, a parody of Barometer Rising centering on the Halifax explosion and the role Hemingway and Trotsky played in this alternate history, appears in the Arrow Dreams anthology edited by fellow Montrealers, Mark Shainblum and John Dupuis.

Horror-meister van Belkom vies for another Stoker

It was a story that almost wasn't completed. Now The Rug is up against the works of no less a formidable author as Stephen King

Brampton, Ont., author Edo van Belkom's The Rug is one of the four finalists in the short-story category of the Bram Stoker Award.

For van Belkom, The Rug began with the idea of an old woman sweeping the dirt under her rug and in a few days the dirt would be gone. But like most of van Belkom's 140-plus short stories, the premise grew from that germ of an idea into something a bit more.

"When I started writing the story the idea expanded from dirt to her problems, which just happened to be people like her landlord," van Belkom explained.

The Rug appeared in the anthology Robert Bloch's Psychos, edited by Robert Bloch. Joining van Belkom's short story is King's Autopsy Room Four (which also appeared in the anthology), Blues-Born by Tina L. Jens and The Dead Boy at Your Window by Bruce Holland Rogers.

It's the second straight year van Belkom has been nominated in the short fiction category. Last year, his story Rat Food (co-written with David Nickle), won the award. This year's awards will be presented on June 5.

The Bram Stoker Awards have been given annually by the Horror Writers Association since 1988. This is the first year awards are being handed out in the categories of anthology, illustrative narrative, screenplay, work for young readers and other media.

The awards are voted upon by the active members of the Horror Writers Association, an international organization of horror writing professionals.

But if it wasn't for a newsletter, the story wouldn't have seen the light of day.

"When the Horror Writers Association announced the guidelines for the Psychos anthology I started writing the story, but stopped halfway through thinking it was too silly," van Belkom explained. "I also knew there would be hundreds of stories competing

Photo by Roberta DiMaio

for the few spots in the book, so why bother. But then the HWA newsletter reported that they were short on submissions so I went back and finished the story.

"It just goes to show you that an author is probably the worst judge of his own work."

Van Belkom has published more than 140 short stories. His novels include, Wyrm Wolf, Lord Soth and Mister Magick.

Despite the second consecutive nomination, van Belkom doesn't see it as an advantage or hindrance.

"For me there's no real difference between this year and last year when I was up against three writers who nobody knew. I think the membership of HWA, which will be doing the voting, will be judging the stories on their own merits and not by who wrote them," van Belkom said. "Stephen King himself has said, 'It's the tale, not he who tells it.'

"The real difference is with everyone else. When you say to somebody 'I'm up for a writing award against Stephen King' they seem to take notice."

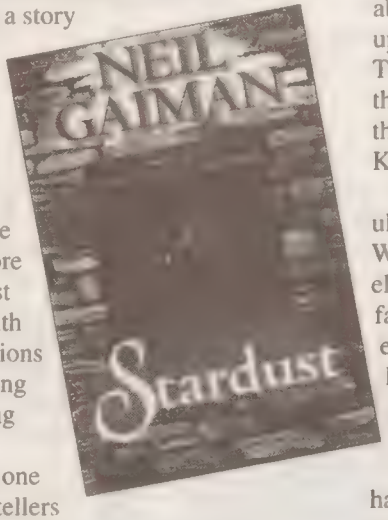
☆

Stardust: the ice cream tastes great

Faerie Tale a satisfying fare for Neil Gaiman fans

Deep thinkers beware: Stardust (Avon Eos) is not the book for you. Nor is it intended to be.

Stardust is, in the most simplest of descriptions, a story. But what a story it is.



In describing Stardust, author Neil Gaiman said it was ice cream — tastes good and offers a feeling of satisfaction when you're done. I can think no more apt a definition. Stardust is an enjoyable book with no pretension or aspirations to be an epic or delivering an important life-altering message.

Gaiman has become one of the preeminent storytellers of the past few years and with good reason. He is diverse, his stories are compelling and his characters well-drawn and his pacing is never forced. Stardust is a perfect example.

The tale follows the adventures of Tristran Thorn who has to retrieve a fallen star in order to win the heart of Victoria Forester. The problem is that the star has landed in the land of Faerie — a place that has been walled off from his town and that is inhabited by unknown beasts and three witches who also want the star.

When the dust clears, the bookis a great love story. A great, satisfying love story.

Chris Krejlgaard

Coming into an epic fantasy series by way of the second volume is not the best introduction but it works fine with George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire series. By the end of the first few chapters dealing with the War of the Seven Kingdoms as seen from the viewpoints of various characters, you know all you need to about the background that was set up in the previous novel, A Game of Thrones, and you're free to enjoy all the intrigue, deception, and heroics that goes on during A Clash of Kings (Bantam/Spectra)..

Those familiar with Martin's regular science fiction work, and the Wild Cards series of superhero novels he ramrods with the aid of various fellow sf and fantasy writers, will find he's equally adept at fantasy, especially where it involves creating sympathetic anti-heroes among his supporting characters.

Gregg Chamberlain

With the passing of Judith Merril, Phyllis Gotlieb has become the grand dame of Canadian science fiction.

Last year's Flesh and Gold and now Violent Stars (Tor/H.B. Fenn) cement this reputation.

In her latest novel, Gotlieb presents a sequel to Flesh and Gold. Some of the characters return to do battle with the machinations of an evil intergalactic corporation.

Yeah, I know it sounds like tried-and-tired science fiction fare. But Gotlieb infuses the story with an energy and a freshness that carries the reader from page to page. In reading Violent Stars, the reader soon becomes aware that they are in the care of a true artisan who plies her craft with all the skill imaginable. When the final page has been turned, the reader is left with just one question, what's next?

Lars Johansen

In **Starfish** (Tor/H.B. Fenn) Peter Watts, who has made a sizeable impact in Canada with a number of short stories during recent year, presents a morality tale of volunteers who are altered to work deep in the ocean in an attempt to tap into a geothermal source of energy.

At the same time, the world is threatened by devastating earthquakes.

Watts' style and firm grasp of technology holds promise for the future. But in Starfish, the promise goes largely unfulfilled because of a plot that covers well-trodden territory — (such movies as The Crack in the Earth, Outland, Abyss, etc.).

This being said, I can't wait until Watts next novel to see if the promise will be fulfilled.

Lars Johansen

If mystery writer Raymond Chandler had ever turned his hand to science fiction, Noir (TOR./H.B. Fenn) is the kind of book he would have written. K.W. Jeter's moody novel contains just the right amount of black cynicism leavened with a trace of hope amidst the grey layers of despair.

McNihil is a retired asp-head, the nickname for Collection Agency investigators, trying to make enough from freelance work to keep up the payments on his dead wife's life. The corporates want him for a special job. He's not crazy about the idea.

Because in a world where Reality is just another word for nothing left to lose, Truth can do more than just hurt.

Gregg Chamberlain

Joel Champetier has been a leader in French Canadian science fiction for quite some time. With The Dragon's Eye (Tor/H.B. Fenn), one of his most imaginative tales becomes accessible to those among us who can't read French.

Originally published as La taupe et le dragon, the story follows the exploits of a secret agent who must capture and return a traitor from deep space. To say much more of the plot would fail to do it justice. The storytelling is crisp and imaginative, while the characters are well-drawn. The Dragon's Eye makes you hope that Champetier's other works will find their way through a translator's hands — and quickly.

Chris Krejlgaard

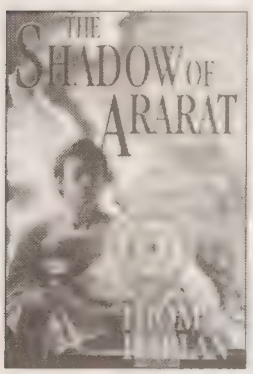
Crank will be for speculative fiction in the 21st Century what The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction became for the genre in the 20th Century.

Which brings us to The Best of Crank!,(Tor/H.B. Fenn) a gleaning of editor Bryan Cholfin's harvest over the past few years.

Crank provides a home for sf and fantasy which is beyond the edge. You may not understand, or appreciate, everything that it prints but you will be intrigued. Which is one of the goals of sf.

Gregg Chamberlain

As a rule, I dislike alternate histories. Let me rephrase that . . . I hate them. What was once an unique and interesting concept has become overdone, trite and unimaginative. The Shadow of Ararat (Tor/H.B. Fenn) is an exception.



Thomas Harlan, who created The Lords of Earth, has done his homework and presents an engrossing novel — the first in a four part series — following Dwyrin MacDonald, Ahmet, Thyatis Julia Clodia and Maxian Atreus in the Roman Empire of 600 A.D.

Rather than simply offering a different version of events and consequences, Harlan crafts a tale featuring an intricate plot and infused with imagination and elements of the fantastic. By doing so, the American author is able to transcend the boundaries presented by the usual alternate histories and breath some life into the joint.

Chris Krejlgaard

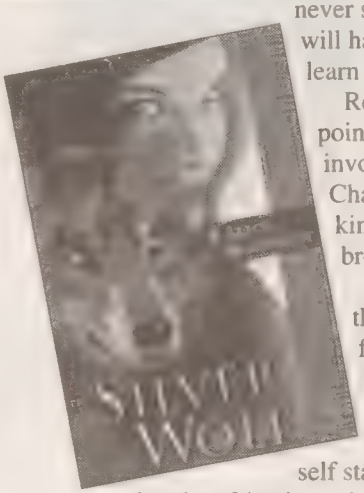
Book One of the Sarantine Mosaic (Viking/Penguin Books) is a wondrous weave of Guy Gavriel Kay's fantastic imagination and his painstaking historical research.

Like mosaic pieces themselves, the novel's intricate, individual details all combine into a larger, more magnificent whole.

Kay returns to the world of The Lions of Al-Rassan but to a different part of that world and a different period in its history. The Sarantine Empire, with its racing factions and its labyrinthine intrigues, is the setting and master mosaicist Caius "Crispin" Crispus its focus. "Sailing to Sarantium" is a saying in this world, meaning to experience a life-changing situation. For Crispin, anwering a summons to Sarantium becomes a voyage of self-discovery with no idea what harbour waits at the end of the journey.

Gregg Chamberlain

The Silver Wolf (DelRey/Ballantine) is a wonderful romance set in Rome during the time when Charlemagne was making his power felt. Regeane, a young woman and lycanthrope, rebells under the thumb of her odious uncle, Gundabald who plans to use her to set him up for life. He never stops reminding her what will happen should the Church learn her secret.



Regeane is also the focal point for a power struggle involving the pope, Charlemagne, the Lombard king, and the scheming power-brokers of Dark Age Rome.

One of the best features of this novel are the strong female characters. Regeane, believing herself cursed, is not ready to just roll over and die. She and her wolf self stand ready to fight, especially when friends are in need.

Gregg Chamberlain

The Last Hawk (Tor/H.B. Fenn) is as fine a mixture of romance and science fiction as you will ever have the pleasure of reading. Asaro's writing is crisp, clean, and packs a wealth of detail and feeling into a few words.

The latest in her Skolian Empire series, the story of Kelric and his marooning on the interdicted world of Coba predates the action in Asaro's other novels, Primary Inversion and Catch the Lightning. It also reintroduces an old mainstay of sword-and-planet adventure—the Game as a way of life.

In The Last Hawk, the game is quis in which players use a variety of dice of different sizes, shapes and colours to outmanoeuvre opponents by building simple and complex patterns. Combining aspects of chess, go, owahree, and other similar board games, quis has replaced warfare on Coba and even proven a viable substitute for certain aspects of our own cyberculture.

The question is what happens to Coba when Kelric, a non-Coban man who only wants to go home, proves to be THE master of quis?

Gregg Chamberlain

The coming of Hover Boy

Toronto company seeks to re-capture hey-day of Canadian animation and deliver a message at same time

The '60s were the heyday for Canadian animators.

Every Canadian baby boomer has childhood memories of Rocket Robin Hood and Hercules, as well as the Land of Oz (and most still know the cartoon's theme song).

But the success of these cartoons was relegated to the Great White North.

Toronto's Krantz Films, on the other hand, gained some renown in the United States for its Spiderman cartoons. Besides producing Rocket Robin Hood from 1965-1969, Kranz Films also produced the second and third seasons of Spiderman.

While these short cartoons cannot compare to the computer-assisted masterpieces produced by Disney, they had a style all their own.

"I wanted to do something that would remind people of the Kranz cartoons."

Now a group of artists and computer experts are paying an off-handed homage to the Krantz cartoons.

"I wanted to do something that would remind people of the Kranz cartoons," explained artist Marcus Moore. "I wanted to emulate the type of animation that was being done by the Canadian market."

Moore and Infinite Monkey Productions are in the midst of producing a 10-minute cartoon called Hover Boy. The production, which just received a $3,000 grant from the National Film Board, is scheduled for release next fall.

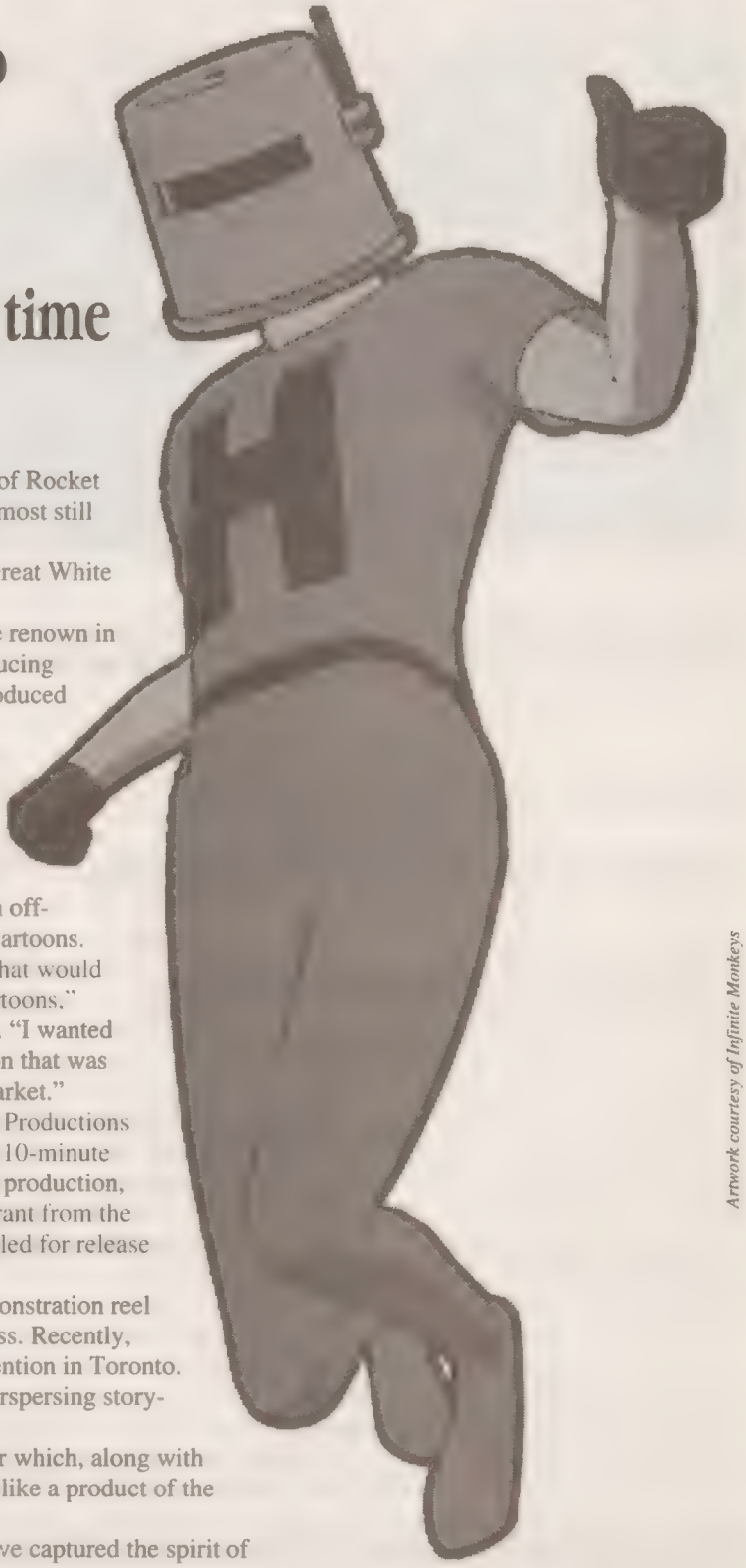
The group completed a demonstration reel as part of the application process. Recently, they showed the reel at a convention in Toronto.

The demonstration has short segments of animation interspersing story-board artwork.

Filters will be used to make the finished product grainier which, along with the uneven lighting being used, will make Hover Boy look like a product of the '40s.

The small amount of animation shows that the artists have captured the spirit of the Kranz work.

However, while the '60s productions were aimed at entertaining children, Hover



Artwork courtesy of Infinite Monkeys

Parsec Photo

Producer Brad Abraham (left), executive producer Isaac Szpindel and Hover Boy creator, writer and director Marcus Moore intend the cartoon to be a send-up of old U.S. government propaganda films. The Toronto-produced film is also intended to have audiences consider the way political correctness has affected social mores.

Up Next . . . zombies and Elvis impersonators in *Viva Las Zombies*

Boy aspires to be something more — while still entertaining.

The story goes: Ace, an investigator with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, is on the way to a Young Republican meeting when the call goes out for Hover Boy.

Hover Boy is called upon to quash the dastardly plans of Communist spies and sympathizers — Canada being named as one of the havens for such sympathizers. He must destroy a rampaging robot that has been set loose on the unsuspecting city.

His belt gives Hover Boy his strength and other abilities. Ultra-patriotic, Hover Boy is nonetheless a bumbler — one that doesn't realize he bumbles.

The cartoon, while paying homage to Kranz Films, cuts to the quick when it comes to the propaganda cartoons that were produced during the Second World War.

Moore and the Infinite Monkey team make no apologies if the cartoon offends some viewers — it's meant to.

"It's meant to have us look at ourselves," explained Infinite Monkey's Issac Szpindel. "It's meant to be anti-isms. We want people to think about how our social mores have been affected by political correctness."

Hover Boy is Moore's brainchild.

Moore, a graduate of Ryerson University's media program, began developing the character and the current project about three years ago.

A corporate videomaker, the project presented him with the perfect opportunity to return to non-corporate filmmaking.

Of course, there was one hurdle to overcome — money.

"Either I made it on the cheap, or I took it in another direction," Moore said.

That other direction was animation. By using equipment that was already at his disposal and computer technology, Moore and Infinite Monkey is able to fulfil their vision of Hover Boy.

Since Moore and Infinite Monkey are not producing the cartoon as an episodic, Hover Boy won't become a Saturday morning staple any time soon. The finished product will be shown at film festivals, as well as on the specialty cable channels.

Both Space: the Imagination Station and the History Channel have expressed interest in the cartoon.

Moore says there is a chance that a sequel will be produced but he doesn't want to "tell the same joke over and over."

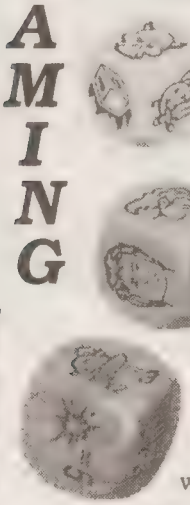
Of course, Hover Boy isn't the only production for Infinite Monkey.

The company is currently laying the groundwork for Viva Las Zombies: the King is Undead, a movie about well . . . zombies, Las Vegas and Elvis impersonators.

☆

TORG back from dead with a vengeance

GAMING NOTES



By JUSTIN MOHAREB

I know, you're thinking; "Where's the special Canada Day column, outlining the various RPG companies located in Canada and their products?"

Sorry.I've been a little distracted lately. First of all, your loyal columnist has recently become engaged. Yes, ladies, I'm sorry, but I'm off the market.

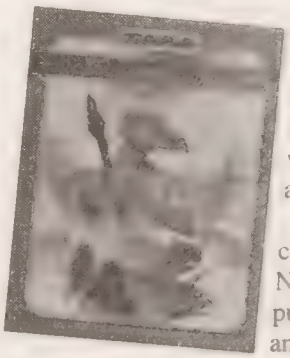
In even BETTER (and MUCH more relevant to this column) news, there's going to be a second edition of TORG!

For those of you who DON'T know, TORG is one of the greatest games in role-playing history. In it, Earth was invaded by a sextet of alien "realities" who wished to steal our Possibility energy. The six realities are each led by a High Lord, who seeks to gain enough energy to become Torg.

To say it was a great game is an understatement. The system, used later as the basis for the Masterbook system, was a joy to play. The best part of the game was the "destiny deck." Every player would draw a number of hands from the deck. Players could use them for a number of purposes, including increasing abilities, or to add another roll to their dice total. They could also be used for plot purposes (Want your character to get lucky? Play the romance subplot!).

The game master would use them to help run the game (they served to encourage a better style of play than 'I shoot, I shoot again'), and they also would help determine initiative from turn to turn.

The system allowed for differentiating between the worlds. Each reality had four axioms, which ranged from 0-33. These axioms (Technology, Spiritual, Magic and Society), as well as various world laws, helped differentiate them.



Of course, they didn't need rules to tell them apart. Each of them were distinct and engaging.

The best (of course) was the Nile Empire. A pulp world with an Egyptian twist, its High Lord was Pharaoh Moebius, an ancient evil Egyptian Pharaoh who'd returned to life in the 1930's (the stars, to quote another game, were right). In his world of pulp powers, mystery men fought headdress-wearing storm troopers. A close second in coolness was the Cyberpapacy. Originally an anti-technology theocracy based on Inquisition-era France, an incident during the invasion of Earth turned it into a high tech cyberpunk realm. The combination of a theocracy, with wicked witches and evil demons, with a cyberpunk setting made for a great game world. The matrix environment of the CP was called the GodNet, and if you were good, you had your soul removed from your body and sent to CyberHeaven.

I even devised a scenario for Con use that allowed the players to be Cyberchurch soldiers fighting a holy crusade in Los Angeles to destroy the Tharkoldu and their demonic Occultech. Oh? I didn't mention the Tharkoldu? They were fun. A realm of techno-demons, they were part of the original invasion. Repelled by Soviet telepaths, it later invaded Los Angeles, turning it into post-apocalyptic hell. The differences between that and what it currently is are, of course, left up to the observer.

There were other realms, of course. Nippon Tech was a world of high science, higher finance, deceit, and betrayal. Orrorsh (hmmm. . . .somebody move that "h" to the beginning) was a realm of Victorian horror that was a bit too

Continued on page 64

TORG
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Tallman

Based in Los Angeles, Tallman was cast by Savini for a role in his film, Knightriders. The film's director was George Romero who subsequently cast her in Monkeyshines, Tales from the Dark Side, Creepshow II and Night of the Living Dead.

During her time in the business, Tallman has become a certified stuntwoman and has worked on such series as Star Trek and in movies such as Jurassic Park and Austin Powers: the Spy Who Shagged Me.

But despite all her film credits and her five seasons on Babylon 5, Tallman's first love is still the stage.

"That's what I went to school to do," Tallman said.

"I started to get frustrated because I would be auditioning for regional the atre and I was bumping up against all these movie and television stars and I wasn't getting the roles."

It took an ill-fated audition for George Bernard Shaw's Man and Superman that finally sent her to Hollywood.

"I auditioned for an artistic director that I'd known for years," she recalled "After the audition, he had tears in his eyes, he was so proud of me because he had known me since I first began work ing professionally.

"He then proceeded to tell me who they had hired because they were going to bring in the ticket sales. That's when it really came home for me."

So she decided to make a name for herself. And through Babylon 5 and her other projects, she has.

Now she's caught in a catch 22. She's established in the industry, but she has also become used to the West Coast lifestyle which is different from one she'd have in New York and the theatre scene.

Tallman is able to "scratch the itch" by being involved in theatre in the Los Angeles area, and is a student of actor Charles Nelson Reilly.

In addition, she's a founding member of The Writing Actors Group, a theatre group which develops and produces original work written by its members.

"Acting is like being a dancer or an athlete, you have to keep working out."

Oliver

other half in the shop, the team basically made aliens ala Mr. Potato Head — a nose from one, eyes from another and antenna from still another.

His biggest project, to date, was the special effects work on Brian DePalma's Snake Eyes, which was shot at the old Montreal Forum.

"You do something and then you do something else and it builds up," Oliver said of the eclectic nature of his work.

On the Adventures of Jules Verne, Oliver works on special effects makeup projects, animatronic work and composes special effects characters — such as a robot that thinks it's a Wild West gunslinger.

"It's like building C3P0. It's not makeup, it's not a costume. It's something else," he said.

Attraction

Of course, on such a special-effects laden project as The Adventures of Jules Verne, Oliver and his company are part of a massive undertaking — an undertaking that has attracted some of Canada's top special effects people.

Among them is Richard Ostiguy, the special effects guru whose work includes Screamers and the Real Adventures of Jonny Quest. On the Adventures of Jules Verne, he serves as the executive in charge of visual effects and post-production.

A graduate of the University of Southern California, Ostiguy's specialty is computer graphics — he developed specialized software for Disney that was used in such features as The Little Mermaid and Who Framed Roger Rabbit.

"We have a large special effects component," said former series' producer Michael Mullally

"Certainly, the knowledge base in the industry has accelerated over the years and now we're doing things that we wouldn't have been able to afford a few years ago," he added in reference to the myriad of computer stations that will be essential in morphing the series' effects into the episodes.

Anderson

books would only have a limited time to live," Anderson said of his decision to leave the industry. "Batman gave it a shot in the arm, but no one could see what was going to come.

"Most of us thought we should leave."

Many of the artists who, like Anderson, left the industry and entered animation or remained involved in related areas.

When he left DC Comics and the industry, Murphy took over the contract for PS magazine — a comic publication for the U.S. Army that covers preventive maintenance of equipment.

Even more than a quarter-century after leaving DC Comics, Anderson still picks up the occasional copy to keep tabs on the characters he helped shape.

"They're certainly different," Anderson said. "But they have to change to stay young. It's a very difficult job an editor has to keep a character who is 60 years old behaving like a 30 year old."

Looking back on his decision, Anderson says it was the right one to make even though the rumours of the industry's demise — at least back then — were greatly exaggerated.

"It's a medium for a younger audience, and the older you get, the more out of touch you become," Anderson explains. "There's nothing you can do about it, it's a fact of life.

"Things change and it's difficult for creative people to keep up."

But this doesn't mean that Anderson has turned his back on the industry and its fans. Far from it.

In his latest endeavour, Anderson is revisiting these characters by painting cover recreations of his classic comics for Diamond Galleries at the comic distributors' offices in Maryland.

Spring Program Schedule

SPACE IMAGINATIONSTATION

Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Time
6:00am	Mysterious Forces Beyond					Space News	Mys For	
6:30am.	Science Show							
7:00am.	Prisoners of Gravity							
7:30am.	Dr. Who							4:30am
8:00am.	Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea							
8:30am.								
9:00am.	Lost in Space					Space	Canadian	6:00am
9:30am						Precinct	Documentar	6:30am
10am	Star Trek					Star Trek		
10:30am								7:30am
11:00am	War of the Worlds					Space Above		
11:30am						And Beyond	Elec. Playgrd	8:30a.m
Noon	**Twilight Zone**					Alien Nation		9:00an
12:30pm	Weird Science							9:30am
1:00pm	Alfred Hitchcock Presents					Green Hornet	Twilight Zone	
1:30pm	Batman					Twilight Zone	Serials	10:30am
2:00pm	VR 5	Nowhere	American	Space Island	Dark			11:00am
2:30pm		Man	Gothic	One	Skies	Movie	Movie	11:30am
3:00pm	Space	Space Above	Beauty and	Space Island	Dark			noon
3:30pm	Specials	and Beyond	the Beast	One	Skies			12.30pm
4:00pm	Star Trek					UFO		
4:30pm						Files		
5:00pm	Quantum Leap						Space	
5:30pm						Conan		
6:00pm	Twilight Zonee					Sliders	Invasion	
6:30pm							Earth	
7:00pm	Babylon 5s					Crusade	Raven	4:00pm
7:30pm								
8:00pm	The	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	The		
8:30pm	Raven					Crow	Movie	
9:00pm	Lexx	The	First	Mortal	Lexx	Movie		
9:30pm		Crow	Wave	Kombat				
10:00pm	Star Trek: Next Generation						movie	
10:30pm								
11:00pm	X-Files					Movie		
11:30pm								
midnight								
12:30am							Island On	
1:00am	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	American	Space	
1:30am						Gothic		
2:00am	X-Files							
2:30am						Crusade		
3:00am	Babylon 5					Invasion		
3:30am						America		
4:00am	Next Generation					Nowhere Man		
4:30am								
5:00am	X-Files					Star		
5:30am						Trek		2:30am

Highlights

Crusade
The long-awaited Babylon spin-off hits the airwaves in June. Saturdays at 4 and 11 p.m..

Quantum Leap,
Scott Bakula leaps from body to body and from crisis to crisis, while Dean Stockwell tries to guide him home. Weekdays at 5 p.m.

Mortal Kombat,
The video game-cum- movie has found a home on the small screen. Weekdays at 9 p.m.

Twilight Zone
The classic series still packs a dramatic punch even after 40 years. Weekdays at noon. and 6 p.m.

Can't get Space in your area? Call your cable company

HUGOs

Spectrum 5: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art, Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner, eds. (Underwood Books)
The Works of Jack Williamson: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide, Richard A. Hauptmann (The NESFA Press)

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Babylon 5: "Sleeping in Light"
Dark City
Pleasantville
Star Trek: Insurrection
The Truman Show

PROFESSIONAL EDITOR

Gardner Dozois
Scott Edelman
David G. Hartwell
Patrick Nielsen Hayden
Stanley Schmidt
Gordon Van Gelder

PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

Jim Burns
Donato Giancola
Nick Stathopoulos
Bob Eggleton
Don Maitz
Michael Whelan

SEMIPROZINE

Interzone, David Pringle
Locus, Charles N. Brown
The New York Review of Science Fiction, Kathryn Cramer, Ariel Haméon, David G. Hartwell & Kevin Maroney
Science Fiction Chronicle, Andrew I. Porter
Speculations, Kent Brewster

FANZINE

Ansible, Dave Langford
File 770, Mike Glyer
Mimosa, Richard & Nikki Lynch
Plokta, Alison Scott & Steve Davies
Tangent, David A. Truesdale Thyme, Alan Stewart

FAN WRITER

Bob Devney
Dave Langford
Maureen Kincaid Speller
Mike Glyer
Evelyn C. Leeper

FAN ARTIST

Freddie Baer
Brad Foster
Ian Gunn
Teddy Harvia
Joe Mayhew
D. West

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (Not a Hugo)

Kage Baker
Julie E. Czerneda
Nalo Hopkinson
Susan R. Matthews
James Van Pelt

GAMING

adored by some circles.

Aysle was the most standard of the realms, a generic fantasy realm with happy fairies and centaurs. The Living Land, which unfortunately held Canada and the United States, was the oddest, yet least well realised, realm.

A realm filled with great beasts and greater spiritual power, it never really got off the ground. The game was ahead of its time. Its advertising campaign was designed to pique the interest of gamers months ahead of time, teasing us with glimpses into the Infiniverse. The game was played by thousands of players, but they could each affect the central game world. Each month, GMs could submit reports, describing what their players had done to help or hinder the high lords.

Unfortunately, Torg suffered a quiet death. The game was wrapped up in a less than thrilling final module entitled, oddly enough, War's End. In it, the embodiment of the universe, in the form of an RPG designer (I wish I was kidding.) saves the multiverse. Thankfully, West End, after noticing a large following for Torg (evidenced by the vast amounts of Torg product they shipped during their sales), has decided to produce a second edition.

I don't fool myself into thinking they'll be able to support it as strongly as they did the first time out. But a cleaned up and revitalised second edition will be a great start. Maybe I can get a new Torg group together, and send Storm Knights adventuring across the globe. I should go shuffle my destiny deck.

❑ Justin Mohareb is hoping for a fall wedding. Gifts may be sent C/O Parsec. Gift Certificates to your favourite SF store are always appreciated. A toaster would be even more so.

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Conventions

May 21-23
KEYCON 16: Place Louis Riel Hotel, Winnipeg, Man. Scheduled guests: David Drake, Dennis Beauvas. Registration: $30. until Dec 31. Information: (204)256-9325 or www.icenter.net/stornel/keycon/keycon.htm.

May 21-23
V-CON 24: Surrey Inn, 9850 King George Highway, Surrey, B.C. Scheduled guests: A.C. Crispen, Michael Capobianco, Betty Bigelow and David Bigelow. Registration: $45 at door. Information: 110-1855 West 2nd Ave, Vancouver, B.C., V6J 1J1.

June 18-20
CON-MONALITY EARTH: FINAL CONFLICT CONVENTION. NovoAirport Hotel, Toronto. Scheduled guests: Leni Parker , Von Flores. Registration: NA. Information: PO Box 21146, RPO Meadowlands, Mississauga, Ont., L5N 6A2.

July 9-11
Toronto Trek 13: Hotel: Regal Constellation, Dixon Road, Toronto, Ont.. Scheduled guests: TBA; Registration: weekend pass $40 adult, $20 child. Information: (416) 410-8266; SASE Suite 0116, Box 187, 65 Front St., Toronto, Ont., M5J 1E6; tcon@icomm.ca, www.icomm.ca/tcon

July 23-25
Conversion 16: Carriage House, Calgary. Scheduled guests: Ben Bova and Tanya Huff. Information: Unit 4, 203 Lynnview Rd SE, Calgary, AB, T2C 2C6 or garyf@nucleus.com.

August 7
Costume Conference North 2: Site: International Conference Centre, Toronto. Registration: $20 adult and $10 for children 6 to 13 until July 15; $25 and $12 at the door. Information: 300 Coxwell Ave., Box 3026, Toronto, M4L 2A0 or schofield.miller@sympatico.ca

August 26-29
CONUCOPIA 1999 NASFiC: Anaheim Marriott, Anaheim, CA. Scheduled guests: Jerry E. Pournelle. Registration: $55.00 (US). Information: NASFic 99, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA, 91409 www.99.nasfic.org.

August 27-29
Canadian National Comic Book Expo 99: Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Information: www.hobbystar.com/comicexpo.

September 2-6
AUSSIECON THREE 57TH WORLD SF CONVENTION: Various hotels in Melbourne, Australia. Scheduled guests: George Turner, Gregory Benford, Bruce Gillespie. Resigration: $65.00 (US) if you voted, $140 (US) if you didn't. Information: GPO Box 1212K, Melbourne,VIC, 3001, Australia.

October 15-17
Canvention 99/inCONsequential II: Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, Fredericton, N.B. Scheduled guests: Tanya Huff. Registration: $25.00 until Mar 31. Information: 45 Charm Ct., Fredericton, N.B., E3B 7J6 or badavis@nbnet.nb.ca

October 22-24
Primedia: Stage West All Suites Hotel, 5400 Dixie Rd., Mississauga, Ont.L4W 4T4 Scheduled guest: Chase Masterson. Information: Box 21146, RPO Meadowvale, Mississauga, ON L5N 6A2, or primedia@iname.com

November 12-14
Comic Freek '99: Toronto International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd. Mississauga Scheduled guests: TBA. Information: www.comicfreek.com

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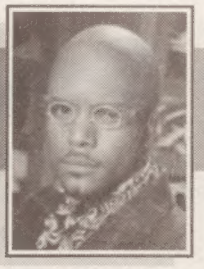
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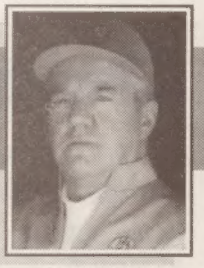
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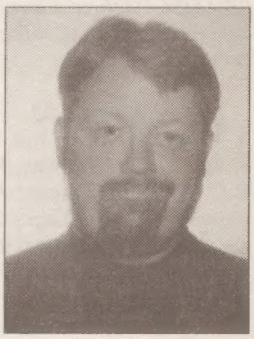
Who's Who

MARGO ELLEN GESSER Margo Ellen Gesser lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she has worked at a variety of funky jobs which have NOTHING to do with her university degrees. Her interests are varied and include martial arts and writing papers for acedemic conferences on estoteric topics. Her short story, "Punishment," won first prize at the 1997 Falcon Three Short Story contest.

DONALD FEATHERSTONE is an Ontario-based writer, whose work has appeared in Story Teller Magazine, Zygote, Bardic Runes, Distant Suns, Lost Worlds and Keen SF. To escape the horrors of a mundane existence he plays music and writes stories. Those who wish to can reach him via email at donfeatherstone@hotmail.com

DALE L. SPROULE is the author of more than 30 published short stories, including appearances in Ellery Queen's, Pulphouse #1, Tesseracts 5 and Northern Frights 2, 4 and 5. He is married to writer Sally McBride. While he's been nominated for the Aurora Awards six times — twice for writing, once for art and three times for editing (TransVersions) — he has yet to win.



MARK A. RAYNER is a writer and journalist living in London, Ont.. Mark recently learned how to play the bodhran, and hopes he has better luck with it than the player in "The Small Bridge." Any Port in the Storm is his first science fiction story to appear in print. Ní fiú scéal gan údar.

KANDIS WEINER is a confessed tweaked-out geek who enjoys reading the backs of bottles in her medicine cabinet as much as science fiction and technical texts.

GREGG CHAMBERLAIN is Parsec's chief correspondent in Western Canada.

Our Sources

These are the people we turn to for information about comic books in Canada. If you have a question or are looking for a hard-to-find back issue, give them a call.

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Kevin Sauder
Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games
79 Alderney Dr.
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